OLD ENGLISH

JOHN GALSWORTHY

OLD ENGLISH

THE WORKS OF
JOHN GALSWORTHY

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THE MAN OF PROPERTY
THE COUNTRY HOUSE
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THE PATRICIAN
THE DARK FLOWER
THE FREELANDS
BEYOND
FIVE TALES
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THE FIRST AND THE LAST	DEFEAT
THE LITTLE MAN	THE SUN
HALL-MARKED	PUNCH AND GO

OLD ENGLISH

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

BY

JOHN GALSWORTHY

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1926

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PERSONS OF THE PLAY

In Order of Their Appearance

Sylvanus Heythorp . .	Chairman of "The Island Navigation Company"
Gilbert Farney . .	Secretary of the Same
Bob Pillin . . .	Of Pillin & Son, Shipowners
Charles Ventnor . .	Solicitor
Mr. Brownbee . . .	A Creditor of old Heythorp
Four Other Creditors .	Of old Heythorp
Rosamund Larne . .	A Connection of old Heythorp
Phyllis	Her Children
Jock	
Joseph Pillin . . .	Senior Partner of Pillin & Son
Adela Heythorp . .	Daughter of old Heythorp
Two Clerks . . .	Of "The Island Navigation Company"
Two Directors . . .	Of "The Island Navigation Company"
Mr. Westgate . . .	Shareholders of "The Island Navigation Company"
Mr. Winkley . . .	
Mr. Budgen . . .	
Mr. Appleby . . .	
Eight Other Shareholders	Of the Same
A Reporter . . .	Of the *Liverpool Press*
Letty	The Larnes' Maid-of-all-work
Meller	Old Heythorp's Body-servant
Molly	His Daughter's Irish House-maid

TIME 1905

ACT I

SCENE I. The Board Room of "THE ISLAND NAVIGATION COMPANY" *in Liverpool. February* 12*th, five o'clock.*

SCENE II. The Same, February 13*th, three o'clock, during and after the General Meeting.*

ACT II

The LARNES' *Sitting-room at* 23 *Millicent Villas, Liverpool. February* 13*th, four o'clock.*

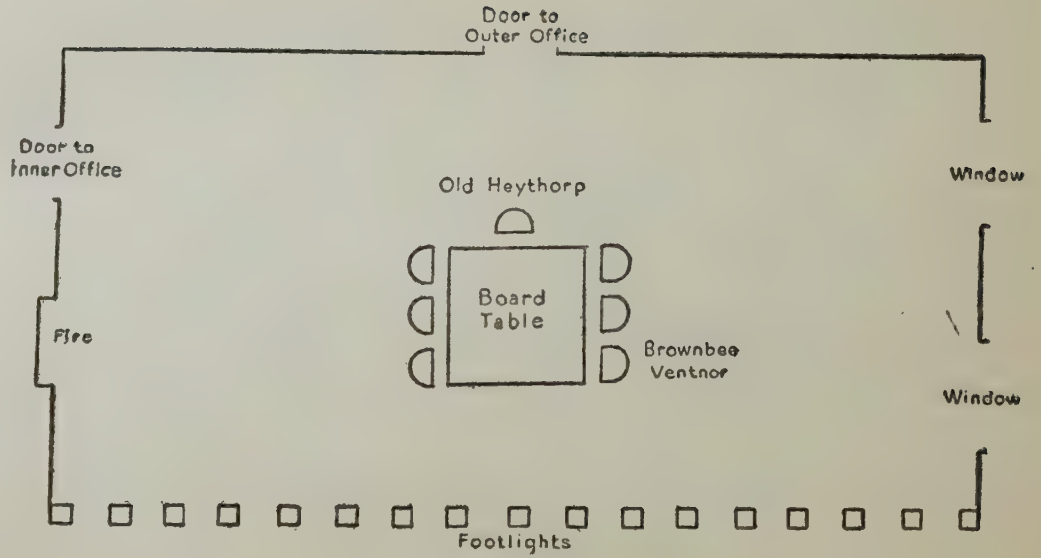
ACT III

SCENE I. OLD HEYTHORP'S *Sanctum in his daughter's house in Sefton Park. February* 14*th, five o'clock.*

SCENE II. The Same, four hours later.

SCENE III. The Same, at 11.30 *the same night.*

ACT I


Door to
Outer Office
Door to
Inner Office
Old Heythorp
Window
Board
Table
Fire
Brownbee
Ventnor
Window
Footlights

ACT I

SCENE I

The Board Room of "The Island Navigation Company, Ltd.," in Liverpool, about five in the afternoon. There are doors, Right, to the inner office, and Back, to the outer office. On the walls are photographs, and one or two models of ships. The Board is over, only the Chairman, OLD HEYTHORP, *remains, presiding over the deserted battlefield of the brain—a long table still littered with the ink, pens, blotting-paper, and abandoned documents of five persons. He is sitting at the head of the table, with closed eyes, still and heavy as an image. One puffy, feeble hand rests on the arm of his chair. The thick white hair on his massive head, his red folded cheeks, white moustache, and little tuft of white on his chin, glisten in the light from green-shaded lamps. He seems asleep.*

GILBERT FARNEY, *the Company's Secretary, enters from the outer office, Back, and steps briskly to the table. About thirty-five, he has the bright hues of the optimist in his eyes, cheeks, and lips. He begins silently*

to gather papers, but stops and looks at his Chairman. "Wonderful old boy!" he seems saying. Suddenly he sees the Chairman looking at him, and cuts off his regard. OLD HEYTHORP *heaves a rumbling sigh.*

HEYTHORP. Have they come, Mr. Farney?

FARNEY. Yes, Sir; but I wasn't going to wake you.

HEYTHORP. Haven't been asleep. Let 'em wait. Suppose you know what they've come for.

FARNEY. Did I understand, Sir, it was a meeting of your—er—creditors?

HEYTHORP. You did. Gold-mine, Mr. Farney.

FARNEY. Yes, Sir. I've heard—in Ecuador, wasn't it?

HEYTHORP. [*Nodding*] Thirteen years ago. Bought it lock, stock and barrel—half in cash, half in promises. These are the promises. Never been able to pay 'em off. The mine was as empty as their heads. [*Rumbling*] Well, not bankrupt, yet.

FARNEY. No, indeed, Sir. No one could get *you* down. Your speech for our General Meeting tomorrow? I suppose I'm to word it according to the decision of the Board this afternoon to buy the Pillin ships. That's a big thing, Sir.

HEYTHORP. Never rest on your oars; go forward or you go back. *Toujours de l'audace!*

FARNEY. I should like to have that on our writing paper, Sir: "The Island Navigation Company—*Toujours de l'audace.*" But I must say I hope freights have touched bottom. Sixty thousand

pounds is a lump for a small company like ours to lay out; there's bound to be some opposition from the shareholders.

HEYTHORP. They'll come to heel.

FARNEY. By the way, Sir, young Mr. Pillin is here. He wants to see you for a minute.

HEYTHORP. Bring him in.

FARNEY *goes to the door, Back, opens it and says "Mr. Pillin!"* BOB PILLIN *enters; a tall young man with round, well-coloured cheeks, round eyes, little moustache, fur coat, spats, diamond pin, and silver-headed Malacca cane.*

BOB PILLIN. How de do, Mr. Heythorp?

HEYTHORP. How's your father?

BOB PILLIN. Tha-anks, rather below par, worryin' about our ships. He sent me round to see if you've any news for him. He was comin' himself, only this weather——

HEYTHORP. Your father's got no chest—never had. Tell him from me to drink port—add five years to his life.

[BOB PILLIN *chuckles.*

Beginning to look forward to his shoes, eh? Dibs and no responsibility.

BOB PILLIN *stops his own mouth with the head of his cane.*

HEYTHORP. Scratch a poll, Poll!

[BOB PILLIN *evacuates his mouth, startled.*

Give you a note for him presently. Help me up, Mr. Farney.

FARNEY *heaves and* HEYTHORP *pulls. The old man gets on his feet and passes, unimaginably slow, towards the inner office.*

You can bring 'em in, now. [*He goes.*

BOB PILLIN. By Jove! the old boy *is* gettin' a back number. His nickname fits him down to the ground—"Old English!" He is.

FARNEY. [*Loyal to his Chairman*] He's a wonderful man. It's a treat to see him cross a road—everything has to wait for him.

BOB PILLIN. I say, those chaps in there—what have they come for?

FARNEY. I wonder, Sir. [*Opening the door into the outer office*] Come in, gentlemen. Will you wait in here, Mr. Pillin?

SIX GENTLEMEN *enter*—CHARLES VENTNOR, *first, encountering* BOB PILLIN *in the doorway.*

VENTNOR. Hallo, Pillin!

BOB PILLIN. Hallo, Ventnor! How are you?

VENTNOR. Thanks, bobbish!

BOB PILLIN. Mrs. Ventnor well?

VENTNOR. So-so.

They cross each other and BOB PILLIN *goes out.*

CHARLES VENTNOR *is short, squarely built, with a reddish-brown moustache; a certain fulvous-foxy look about him. He sits at the table. The second gentleman to come in,* MR. BROWNBEE, *is seventy years old, with a pink face and little thin grey*

whiskers. He sits next to VENTNOR. *The other* FOUR GENTLEMEN *also take seats.* FARNEY *goes into the outer office.*

VENTNOR. The old chap's got a nerve, keeping us hanging about like this.

BROWNBEE. I'm afraid he's very feeble, Mr. Ventnor—very feeble; only just gets about.

VENTNOR. He sticks to his Boards all right, Mr. Brownbee.

BROWNBEE. Can't retire, I fear—lives on his fees, they tell me.

VENTNOR. Old guinea-pig!

BROWNBEE. I think one must admire his resolution; quite a figure in Liverpool these twenty years—quite.

VENTNOR. [*Sinking his voice*] Awful old rip. Got at least one family he oughtn't to.

BROWNBEE. Tt, tt! Is that so?

VENTNOR. [*Sinking his voice*] Fact! Rosamund Larne—the story-writer—client of mine—she's the widow of a son of his born long before his marriage. Fine-looking woman she is, too.

BROWNBEE. Ah! The early Victorians! Before the influence of the dear old Queen. Well, times change.

VENTNOR. U'm! Don't know about that. But I do know he keeps me out of my money. [*Raising his voice*] If you ask me, gentlemen, we'd better break the old ship up and salve what we can.

A CREDITOR. Pretty hard wood, Mr. Ventnor; real old man-o'-war teak.

VENTNOR. Well, his autocratic airs don't suit me. I'm for putting the screw on tight.

BROWNBEE. I think—I think, if you would leave it to me, Mr. Ventnor. The *suaviter in modo*——

VENTNOR. Will never get me my three hundred.

OLD HEYTHORP has entered. A silence falls. Five of the CREDITORS *rise, but* VENTNOR *continues to sit.* OLD HEYTHORP *advances slowly, resumes his seat at the table, and looks round with a defiant twinkle. They all sit.* FARNEY *enters from the inner office, bringing a cup of tea which he places before* OLD HEYTHORP.

HEYTHORP. [*With a bow*] Excuse me, gentlemen; had a long Board. [*He conveys the cup to his mouth and drinks; his* CREDITORS *watch in suspense with which is blended a sort of admiration at his accomplishment of this difficult feat.* OLD HEYTHORP *puts the cup down, and feebly removes some drops from the little white tuft on his chin*] Well! My bankers have given you every information, I hope.

A CREDITOR. [*A Clergyman*] Mr. Heythorp, we've appointed Mr. Brownbee to voice our views. Mr. Brownbee!

BROWNBEE. Mr. Heythorp, we are here to represent about £14,000. When we had the pleasure of meeting you last July, you held out a prospect of some more satisfactory arrangement by Christmas. But we are now in February, and I am bound to say none of us get younger.

HEYTHORP. Don't you? H'm! *I* feel like a boy.

[*The* CREDITORS *shuffle.*

VENTNOR. [*To* BROWNBEE] He's going to put us off again.

BROWNBEE. [*Suavely*] I'm sure we're very glad to hear it—very glad, indeed. U'm! To come to the point, however. We feel, Mr. Heythorp, not unreasonably, I think, that—well—bankruptcy would be the most satisfactory solution. We have waited a long time, and, to be quite frank, we don't see any prospect of improvement; indeed, we fear the opposite.

HEYTHORP. Think I'm going to join the majority, eh?

[*A slight embarrassment among the* CREDITORS.

VENTNOR. Put it that way if you like.

HEYTHORP. My grandfather lived to be a hundred, gentlemen; my father ninety-six—three-bottle men, both of 'em. Only eighty odd myself; blameless life compared with theirs.

BROWNBEE. Indeed, we hope you have many years of this life before you—many.

HEYTHORP. You're getting a thousand a year out of my fees. I'll make it thirteen hundred. Bankrupt me, I shall lose my directorships, and you won't get a rap.

BROWNBEE. [*After a pause, clearing his throat*] We think you should make it at least fifteen hundred, Mr. Heythorp. We fancy you greatly underrate the possibilities of your bankruptcy.

HEYTHORP. I know 'em—you don't. My qualify-

ing shares will fetch about a couple of thousand; my bank'll take most of that. House I live in, and everything in it, bar my togs, my wine, and my cigars, belong to my daughter under a settlement fifteen years old. Got nothing else. Position in a nutshell, gentlemen.

BROWNBEE. We understand your income from your fees and dividends to be some two thousand pounds a year, Sir.

HEYTHORP. [*Shaking his head*] Nineteen hundred in a good year. Must eat and drink—must have a man to look after me, not as active as I was. Got people dependent on me. Can't do on less than six hundred. Thirteen hundred a year's all I can give you, gentlemen. No use beating about the bush; take it or leave it.

[*The* CREDITORS *rise to consult.*

VENTNOR. And if we leave it?

HEYTHORP. Kill the goose that lays the golden eggs—that's all.

BROWNBEE. Mr. Heythorp, in consideration of your—er— [*But he stops at the old man's fighting look*] we shall accept your offer of thirteen hundred a year.

HEYTHORP. Ah! Keep the bird alive—sound policy.

BROWNBEE. We certainly don't wish to press too hardly on one who for many years has been a man of mark in Liverpool. In fact, we—excuse me—admire your courage in keeping a stiff lip in spite of your—your—infirmities. [OLD HEYTHORP *bows*

to him, and he bows to OLD HEYTHORP] We feel you will do your best to give us all you can; and we—er—wish you many years of life.

CREDITOR. [*The Clergyman, rising*] I have long felt—not as a man of the world precisely—that Mr. Heythorp would feel his conscience lighter if we could relieve him of——

VENTNOR. Our money.

CREDITOR. [*Slightly disconcerted*] Well, that is perhaps in effect the position. We—er—are, in fact, a thorn in his side, and for his own good he feels no doubt that he would like to have us—er—removed. [*Laughs*] If, however, the process must be—er—prolonged——

VENTNOR. Get on with it, Sir.

CREDITOR. [*Disconcerted*] Exactly! With these few words, I am entirely at one with Mr. Brownbee.

VENTNOR. [*Sotto voce*] Amen!

HEYTHORP. Much obliged to you, gentlemen—very sporting of you. Shall act towards you in the same spirit.

BROWNBEE. Good-day, then, Sir. Don't get up, I beg.

CREDITORS. Good-day, Sir.

OLD HEYTHORP *salutes them. They follow on the heels of* MR. BROWNBEE. MR. VENTNOR *has remained behind.*

VENTNOR. Sorry not to have been able to join the mutual admiration society, Mr. Heythorp. Your debt to me is £300. I think it might be worth your while to consider whether you can't settle

that separately. I'm a lawyer, and neither very trustful nor very patient.

HEYTHORP. Go behind their backs, do you? Eh.

VENTNOR, *very angry, is about to speak, when the door from the outer office is opened, and* FARNEY *enters.*

VENTNOR. You made a big mistake in saying that, Mr. Heythorp. Good evening!

[*He goes out.*

FARNEY. I beg your pardon, I thought you were alone, Sir.

HEYTHORP. That's an ugly dog. What's his name?

FARNEY. Ventnor, Sir; a solicitor. There are two ladies to see you, Sir.

HEYTHORP. Ladies?

FARNEY. A Mrs. and Miss Larne: there's a boy with them.

HEYTHORP. M'yes! Well, show 'em in.

FARNEY *opens the door into the outer office.* ROSAMUND LARNE *enters, preceded by her children,* PHYLLIS, *and* JOCK, *who tweaks* FARNEY'S *coat-tail as he passes, then stands seraphic, gazing at the ceiling, while* FARNEY *pursues his way out with dignity.*

PHYLLIS. Jock, you *are* an awful boy! Guardy, he really is too awful.

PHYLLIS *is like a day in April, fair and fresh, and seventeen. The boy* JOCK *has a pink seraphic face, and the just breaking*

voice of fourteen; he wears Eton jacket and collar, and carries a school cap.

PHYLLIS. He won't wear his overcoat, and he will wear that frightful cap with his Eton jacket. [JOCK *puts it on dreamily*] Look! Isn't he a horror?

MRS. LARNE *takes* OLD HEYTHORP'S *puffy hand and presses it to her ample bosom. She is of a fine florid beauty and perhaps thirty-eight.*

MRS. LARNE. Dear old Guardy! Do forgive us for coming. I had to see you, and I couldn't leave these children outside, you never know what they'll do.

While she speaks the boy JOCK *has quietly pinned his mother's and sister's floating hat-scarves together, and, withdrawing, puts his fingers to his mouth and emits a piercing whistle.* PHYLLIS *rushing to thump him, the two hats fall off, and two hands fly to two heads.*

PHYLLIS. Isn't he a *pig?*

Advancing on JOCK, *she hustles him out into the outer office and stands with her back against the door.* MRS. LARNE *adjusts her hat calmly, with her low, full, seductive laugh.*

MRS. LARNE. I really had to come and see you, Guardy; we haven't had a sight of you for such an age. Phyllis, go and see after Jock, there's a darling.

PHYLLIS *tosses her head, wrenches open the door and slides out.*

How are you, dear old Guardy!

HEYTHORP. Never better. But I haven't a penny for you.

MRS. LARNE. [*With her laugh*] How naughty of you to think I came for that! But I am in a terrible fix, Guardy.

HEYTHORP. Never knew you not to be.

MRS. LARNE. Just let me tell you. It'll be some relief. I'm having the most dreadful time. [*She subsides into a chair beside him, with a luxurious sigh*] Expect to be sold up any moment. We may be on the streets to-morrow. And I daren't tell the children; they're so happy, poor darlings. I've been obliged to take Jock away from school. And Phyllis has had to stop her piano and dancing; it's an absolute crisis. But for your three hundred, Guardy, you know I'm entirely dependent on my pen. And those Midland Syndicate people—I've been counting on at least two hundred from them for my new story, and the wretches have refused it. Such a delightful story! [*She prevents a tear from rolling on to her powdered cheek with a tiny handkerchief*] It *is* hard, Guardy. I worked my brain silly over it.

HEYTHORP. Rats!

MRS. LARNE. Guardy, how can you? [*With a sigh that would rend no heart*] You couldn't, I suppose, let me have just one little hundred?

HEYTHORP. Not a bob.

MRS. LARNE *looks round the room, then leans towards him.*

MRS. LARNE. Guardy, you *are* so like my dear Philip.

HEYTHORP. Your dear Philip! You led him a devil of a life, or I'm a Dutchman.

MRS. LARNE. Guardy! [*Her eyes wandering*] This office looks so rich. I smelt money all the way upstairs. And your lovely house. We went there first, of course.

HEYTHORP. Not my house. My daughter's. She see you?

MRS. LARNE. We saw *someone* in the hall, when the butler was saying you were here at the office.

HEYTHORP. Deuce you did!

MRS. LARNE. *Such* a lovely house! Guardy, just imagine if your grandchildren were thrown out into the street. Even if they don't know it, still you *are* their grandfather.

[OLD HEYTHORP *only grins.*

Do come to my rescue this once. You really might do something for them.

OLD HEYTHORP'S *defiant cynicism gives way to an idea which strikes him.*

HEYTHORP. H'm! Do something for them! Just got an idea. Yes.

MRS. LARNE. Oh! Guardy!

HEYTHORP. Wait a bit. I'll see. Yes! I'll see. Might be able.

MRS. LARNE. How lovely! But, Guardy, not *just*

fifty now? [OLD HEYTHORP *shakes his head*] Well, [*Getting up*] you'll be sorry when we come round one night and sing for pennies under your window. Isn't Phyllis growing a sweet girl? [*Throwing clouds of perfume, to judge by the expression of* OLD HEYTHORP'S *nose, she goes out calling "Phyllis!"*]

PHYLLIS. [*Entering*] There's *such* a young man in there. He can only just see over his collar. And the way he squints at me—Lawks!

HEYTHORP. Oh! that young pup—I'd clean forgot him. Phyllis! Help me up. [PHYLLIS *tries, and they succeed*] You a good girl?

PHYLLIS. No, Guardy. Can't be when Jock's at home.

HEYTHORP. [*He pats her cheek*] Mind! Chaps like that little-headed young pup in there—not for you. All the same mould, no drive, no vices—nothing. Thinks himself a spark. Why! at his age I'd broken my neck, winged a Yankee, been drowned for a bet, and lost my last bob on the Derby.

PHYLLIS. Had you, Guardy? How *lovely!*

HEYTHORP. H'm! Just keep him looking through his dog-collar, while I write a letter.

He again pats her cheek and goes out into the inner office. A piercing whistle is heard through the open door.

PHYLLIS. [*At the fire—to herself*] There goes Jock! He's bitten that young man, or something juicy.

[BOB PILLIN *comes in.*

PHYLLIS. Oh! young man—so you've escaped! Isn't he a terror?

BOB PILLIN. [*Who is evidently much struck by her*] He is—er—rather. Er—cold, isn't it?

[*Approaches fire.*

PHYLLIS. Yes—jolly.

BOB PILLIN. [*Nervously*] I say, I've left my hat; do you think it's safe?

PHYLLIS. No, of course it isn't. I'll get it?

BOB PILLIN. [*More and more impressed*] No, no! Please don't go. It doesn't matter a bit. My name's Pillin—er—Bob. Are you a relation of "Old English"?

PHYLLIS. "Old English!"

BOB PILLIN. What! Don't you know his nickname?

PHYLLIS. No; we call him Guardy. Isn't he a chook?

BOB PILLIN. Er—I don't know that I should have called him that—er—exactly. It's my Dad who's a friend of his, don't you know?

PHYLLIS. Is your Dad like him?

BOB PILLIN. *Not much!*

PHYLLIS. What a pity!

BOB PILLIN. Ha! D'you mind tellin' me your name?

PHYLLIS. Phyllis.

BOB PILLIN. Rippin'! We live at the last house in Sefton Park.

PHYLLIS. Oh! We live at Millicent Villas. It's a poky little house. We have awful larks though.

BOB PILLIN. Your brother keeps things lively, I expect.

PHYLLIS. Yes. He goes off all the time like a squib.

[*Sounds are heard from the outer office.*

That's mother pinching him. We've never been here before. We call Guardy the last of the Stoic-uns.

BOB PILLIN. [*Still more struck*] I say—that's awfully good—that's—that's very funny.

The outer office door is opened and MRS. LARNE *appears, holding* JOCK *by the ear, and in her other hand* BOB PILLIN'S *flattened-out top hat.*

MRS. LARNE. Is this your h-h-hat, Mr.—Mr.——? [*Laughter overcomes her.* PHYLLIS *is in convulsions.* JOCK *seraphic.*]

BOB PILLIN. [*Taking it*] Er—it—it was.

PHYLLIS. I told you so.

MRS. LARNE. I'm so ashamed. I *thought* he was too quiet. And of course—he—he—was si-itting on it.

BOB PILLIN. [*With a sort of gallantry*] Really! It's—it's—nothing. It doesn't matter a bit.

PHYLLIS. Oh! young man. What a fib! Such a lovely hat!

MRS. LARNE. What *can* we do? You must come and see us, Mr. Billing.

PHYLLIS. Pillin—mother.

BOB PILLIN. Ah! er—yes.

MRS. LARNE. We shall be so pleased if you will.

BOB PILLIN. Thanks. [*Gazing at his hat*] That'll be jolly!

PHYLLIS. We'll tie Jock up.

[JOCK *rolls his eyes fearfully.*

MRS. LARNE. Yes, you horrible boy! Ah! Here's dear Guardy. I shall tell him.

JOCK *simulates terror, as* OLD HEYTHORP *enters from the inner office.*

Guardy, we must go. Good-bye! [*Lowering her voice*] Then very soon you *will* do something, won't you? The children are *so* fond of you, Guardy! [*She presses his hand and swings to the door.*]

HEYTHORP. [*To* BOB PILLIN] Go round and tell your father I want to see him—now, at once.

BOB PILLIN. Oh! Thanks awf'ly, Sir. I hope you'll cheer the old man up.

HEYTHORP. [*Pointing*] What's that thing?

BOB PILLIN. My—er—hat, Sir.

[PHYLLIS *gives way,* JOCK *simulates terror.*

MRS. LARNE. [*From the door*] Come along, you dreadful children. Mr. Pillin, will you see us to our train?

BOB PILLIN. Delighted! I—I'll just run in to our office—next door. Shan't be a shake.

PHYLLIS. [*To* BOB, *who is staring at his hat*] Oh! put it on. *Do* put it on.

BOB PILLIN *puts it on and goes.* PHYLLIS *claps her hands.* MRS. LARNE *and* JOCK *go out.*

PHYLLIS. Good-bye, Guardy dear!

HEYTHORP. Fond of me?

PHYLLIS. Oh! Guardy, I adore you. I wish you'd come and see us oftener.

HEYTHORP. Well! I'll come to-morrow.

PHYLLIS. That'll be *lovely.* [*She kisses him.*]

[*She goes out.*

HEYTHORP. [*To himself*] Fresh as April—clean run stock. By George, I'll do it!

[FARNEY *enters from the outer office.*

FARNEY. Miss Heythorp is below, Sir, with a carriage to take you home; she says she'll wait.

HEYTHORP. Deuce she is! Devil to pay!

FARNEY. And Mr. Joseph Pillin has just come in.

HEYTHORP. [*Sinking into his chair*] Bring him here! Don't want to be disturbed.

FARNEY. Very good, Sir.

He waits for JOSEPH PILLIN *to enter; then crosses and goes out into the inner office.* JOSEPH PILLIN *is a parchmenty, precise, thin, nervous man, with slight grey whiskering, between seventy and eighty, in a fur coat and top hat.*

JOE PILLIN. [*In his rather quavering voice*] Well, Sylvanus, I had your message.

HEYTHORP. Um, Joe! Have a cigar. [*He puts one in his own mouth, and lights it.*]

JOE PILLIN. Cigar! You know I never smoke them. You've a monstrous constitution, Sylvanus. If I drank port and smoked cigars, I should be in my grave in a fortnight. I'm getting old—growing nervous——

HEYTHORP. Always were as scary as an old hen, Joe. Sit down.

JOE PILLIN. Well, my nature's not like yours. About my ships. What news have you? I'm getting anxious. I want to retire. Freights are very depressed. I don't think they'll recover in my time. I've got my family to think of.

HEYTHORP. Crack on sail and go broke—buck you up like anything.

JOE PILLIN. Now, Sylvanus! You make a joke of everything. I'm quite serious.

HEYTHORP. Never knew you anything else, Joe.

JOE PILLIN. Hasn't your Board decided to-day? The sixty thousand I'm asking is a very small price for four good ships.

OLD HEYTHORP *looks at him deeply, twinkles, and blows a puff of smoke.*

Well, Sylvanus?

HEYTHORP. Make it worth my while, Joe, or it won't go through.

JOE PILLIN. Worth your while? [*Bending forward and lowering his voice*] How do you mean—a commission? You could never disclose it.

HEYTHORP. Who wants to? I'll get you sixty thousand for your ships if you'll give me ten per cent. of it. If you don't—deal's off, Joe—not a brass rap.

JOE PILLIN. But it means coming down six thousand in my price.

HEYTHORP. Well, try elsewhere.

JOE PILLIN. But I have. There's no market at all.

HEYTHORP. Then take my offer.

JOE PILLIN. My dear Sylvanus—that's—that's positively cynical. A commission—it's not legal.

HEYTHORP. Not going to take a penny piece myself. I want you to settle it on some protégées of mine.

JOE PILLIN. [*In agitation*] But it's a breach of trust! I really can't be party to a breach of trust. Suppose it came out.

HEYTHORP. Won't come out.

JOE PILLIN. Yes, yes, so you say; but you never know.

HEYTHORP. Nothing to prevent your executing a settlement on some third parties. Who's your lawyer?

JOE PILLIN. My lawyer? Scriven's my lawyer.

HEYTHORP. Well! Get him to draw up a deed poll to-morrow morning. Bring it to me here after the general meeting to-morrow afternoon. If the purchase goes through, you sign it; if it doesn't you tear it up. What stock have you got that gives 4 per cent?

JOE PILLIN. Midland Railway.

HEYTHORP. That'll do—you needn't sell, then.

JOE PILLIN. Yes; but who—who are these—these third parties?

HEYTHORP. Woman and her children—must make provision for 'em. [*At* JOE PILLIN'S *expression*] Afraid of being mixed up with a woman, Joe?

JOE PILLIN. Yes, you may laugh. I *am* afraid of being mixed up with someone else's woman. I don't like it—I don't like it at all. I've not led your life, Sylvanus.

HEYTHORP. Lucky for you—been dead long ago. Tell your lawyer it's an old flame of yours—you old dog.

JOE PILLIN. Yes, there it is at once, you see. I might be subject to blackmail.

HEYTHORP. Tell him to keep your name dark and just pay over the income quarterly.

JOE PILLIN. [*Rising*] I don't like it, Sylvanus—I don't really.

HEYTHORP. Then leave it and be hanged to you! But there'll be no deal, Joe.

JOE PILLIN. Is there no other way?

HEYTHORP. No. Matter must be settled to-morrow. And if I don't pitch it strong to the shareholders, the sale won't go through, that's flat.

JOE PILLIN. It's playing round the law, Sylvanus.

HEYTHORP. No law to prevent you doing what you like with your money. Taking nothing myself—not a mag. You assist the fatherless and widowed—just your line, Joe.

JOE PILLIN. What a fellow you are, Sylvanus! You don't seem capable of taking anything seriously.

HEYTHORP. Care killed the cat. Well?

JOE PILLIN. No, I—I don't think I can do it. Besides, such a sacrifice—six thousand pounds.

HEYTHORP. Very well! Get another bid if you can—freights'll go lower yet.

JOE PILLIN. Oh! do you think so?

HEYTHORP. Sure of it.

JOE PILLIN. Very well, Sylvanus, very well! I suppose I must.

HEYTHORP. Here's the name for your lawyer. Write it down.

[JOE PILLIN *writes.*

Rosamund Larne—with an "e"—23 Millicent Villas, Liverpool, widow of Philip Larne, late of Dublin, barrister-at-law; income to her, until her children, Phyllis Larne and John Larne, attain the

age of twenty-one or marry, then to said Phyllis and said John Larne in equal shares for life, remainder to their children. Got that? Get it drawn to-morrow morning.

JOE PILLIN. [*Raising himself*] It seems to me very irregular—very risky.

HEYTHORP. Go home and drink a bottle of champagne on it. Good-night, Joe. No deed, no deal! I'll trust you.

JOE PILLIN. Well, good-night, Sylvanus, good-night. You always were a dare-devil. [*He quavers to the door of the outer office*] Good-night.

[*He passes out.*

HEYTHORP. [*To himself*] He'll jump. Better than beggary for 'em. [*He sits back with a smile. Then closes his eyes as if in sleep.*]

The door back Left is reopened and ADELA HEYTHORP, *his daughter, comes in; a woman of thirty-two, with dark hair and thin, straight face and figure. She stands just in the room regarding him severely.*

ADELA. You really ought not to be so late, Father. It's most dangerous at this time of year. Are you ready, now?

HEYTHORP. [*Opening his eyes*] No.

ADELA. It's really terrible the way you neglect your health. I've noticed that every time you drink port, you do something dangerous the next day. In weather like this you ought always to get back

before dark. And of course you eat much too much. One would think you were forty, instead of over eighty.

HEYTHORP. Not if they saw you.

ADELA. Really, Father, is that your idea of repartee? Who were your visitors?

HEYTHORP. Ladies and a boy.

ADELA. So I saw. They came to the house first. I know their name is Larne, but it conveyed nothing to me.

HEYTHORP. [*With a grin*] My daughter-in-law, and my grandchildren; that's all.

ADELA. That isn't a bit funny, either.

HEYTHORP. No, it's gospel truth.

ADELA. Then do you mean to say you were married before you married my mother?

HEYTHORP. No.

ADELA. Not married' I see. I suppose these people are hanging round your neck, then. I begin to understand your difficulties. Are there any more of them?

Old HEYTHORP *makes a violent and ineffectual effort to rise.*

You'll hurt yourself. [*Seeing him motionless again*] I suppose you don't realise that it's not an agreeable discovery. I don't know what to think——

HEYTHORP. Think what you like.

ADELA. Are you coming?

HEYTHORP. No.

ADELA. I can't keep this carriage any longer. You'll be late for dinner.

HEYTHORP. Dine in my own room in future. Tell Meller.

ADELA. I don't see why *you* should lose your temper.

HEYTHORP. Because I can't get up, you think you can stand there and worry me.

ADELA. Well, really, I've come especially to fetch you home, and you call it worrying.

HEYTHORP. Paddle my own canoe, thank you.

[ADELA *turns and goes out.*

[*To himself*] Self-righteous cat! [*He makes a sow and considered effort to rise, but fails, and sits motionless. He raps the table with a pen. There is no result. Reaching for an inkpot, he rams it on the table twice.*]

[TWO YOUNG CLERKS *appear at the door, Right.*

HEYTHORP. You young gentlemen had forgotten me.

FIRST CLERK. Mr. Farney said you didn't want to be disturbed, Sir.

HEYTHORP. Give me my hat and coat.

SECOND CLERK. Yes, Sir.

They come, raise him, and help him into hat and coat.

HEYTHORP. Thank you. That carriage gone?

FIRST CLERK. [*Crossing to window and looking out*] Yes, Sir.

HEYTHORP. All right. Tell Mr. Farney to come and see me at noon, about my speech for the general meeting to-morrow.

FIRST CLERK. Yes, Sir.

HEYTHORP. Good-night to you.

CLERKS. Good-night, Sir.

He passes like a tortoise to the door, Back, opens it feebly, and goes out.

FIRST CLERK. Poor old Chairman, he's on his last.

SECOND CLERK. Gosh! He's a tough old hulk—he'll go down fighting. [*Raising the window*] There he goes—slow as a barnacle. He's held the whole street up. Look—under the lamp! [*The* FIRST CLERK *joins him at the window*] I say—that was a near thing—that cart!

FIRST CLERK. He doesn't give a damn for anything.

SECOND CLERK. He's got his tram all right.

FIRST CLERK. See him raising his hat to that old woman—you'd think he'd got all night before him.

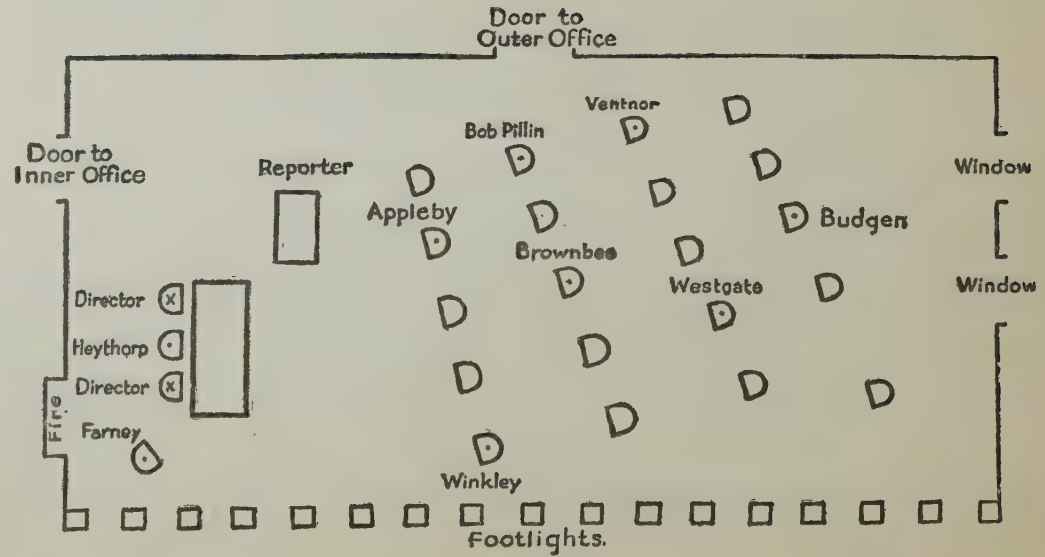
SECOND CLERK. Old school—what!

FIRST CLERK. He's got pluck, and he's got manners. Good "Old English!"

SECOND CLERK. There they go! Ting-a-ling!

[*He shuts the window down.*

THE CURTAIN IS LOWERED FOR A MINUTE.


Door to
Outer Office
Door to
Inner Office
Reporter
Ventnor
Bob Pillin
Appleby
Brownbee
Budgen
Westgate
Window
Window
Director
Heythorp
Director
Farney
Fire
Winkley
Footlights.

SCENE II

The same, converted to the purposes of the General Meeting. The three chairs back to the fire, on the Right, are those of OLD HEYTHORP *and two fellow-Directors, of whom the first is on his feet.* FARNEY *stands by the Chairman, a little back of him. Facing them are four rows of five chairs each, with fourteen seated* SHAREHOLDERS. *At a small table, on the far Left, is a* REPORTER. OLD HEYTHORP *is finishing his Chairman's speech.*

HEYTHORP. Come to this arrangement with Messrs. Pillin—owners of the four steamships, *Smyrna, Damascus, Tyre, and Sidon*— [*His voice is failing*] —vessels in prime condition. . . .

MR. BUDGEN] (A SHAREHOLDER). [*From the back*] Excuse me, Sir, we can't hear a word down here.

HEYTHORP. With a total freight-carrying capacity of fifteen thousand tons.

[THREE SHAREHOLDERS *rise.*

MR. BUDGEN. We might as well go home. If the Chairman's got no voice, can't somebody read for him?

OLD HEYTHORP *takes a sip of water and goes on, a little louder.*

HEYTHORP. At the low inclusive price of £60,000. Gentlemen, *Vestigia nulla retrorsum.*

SHAREHOLDER. Can't hear a word.

OLD HEYTHORP *hands his speech to* FARNEY *and sinks into his seat.*

FARNEY. The Chairman has just said, "*Vestigia nulla retrorsum.*"

MR. BUDGEN. Yes, very convincing.

FARNEY. [*Reading*] "Times are bad, but they are touching bottom. I have said freights will go up. This is the moment for a forward stroke. With the utmost confidence we recommend your ratification of this purchase, which we believe will soon substantially increase the profits of the Company."

FARNEY *sits down and glances at* OLD HEYTHORP, *who nods to the* DIRECTOR *on his left.*

DIRECTOR. [*Rising and combing his beard with his fingers*] Before moving the adoption of the Report, we welcome any comment from shareholders.

[*He sits down.*

TWO SHAREHOLDERS, *one in the second, one in the third row, rise.* OLD HEYTHORP *nods at the one in the second row.*

FARNEY. Mr. Brownbee.

MR. BROWNBEE. I should like, if I may be allowed, to congratulate the Board on having piloted our ship so smoothly through the troublous waters of the past year. ("Hear, hear!") With our worthy Chairman still at the helm, I have no doubt that, in spite of the still low, I might even say falling barometer, and the—er—unseasonable climacteric, we may rely on weathering the—er—storm. I confess

that the present dividend of 4 per cent. is not one which satisfies—or—every aspiration; ("Hear, hear!") but speaking for myself, and I hope for others, [*He looks round*] I recognise that in all the circumstances it is as much as we have the right to expect. ("No, no.") It is very gratifying to have these ample reserves; and by following the bold, but to my mind prudent, development which the Board proposes to make, we may reasonably, if not sanguinely, expect a more golden future. ("No, no!") A shareholder keeps on saying, "No, no" —from that lack of confidence I should like to dissociate myself. Our Chairman, whose strategic wisdom has been proved on many a field, would not so strongly advocate the purchase of these Pillin ships without good reason. He well said "*Vestigia nulla retororium.*" I venture to think there can be no better motto for Englishmen. Ahem! Ahem!

[*He sits down.*

The other SHAREHOLDER *rises again.* OLD HEYTHORP *nods at him.*

FARNEY. Mr. Westgate.

MR. WESTGATE. [*A breezy fellow*] I want to know much more about this proposition to purchase these ships. I doubt its wisdom; I very much doubt it. To whom was the proposal first made?

HEYTHORP. To me, Sir.

MR. WESTGATE. The Chairman says to him. Very well! But what I want to know is why are Pillins sellin', if freights are to go up as the Chairman prophesies.

HEYTHORP. Matter of opinion.

MR. WESTGATE. Quite so. And in my opinion they're goin' lower; and Pillins are right to sell. If that's so, we're wrong to buy. ("Hear, hear!") ("No, no!") Pillins are shrewd people.

HEYTHORP. They're rattled.

MR. WESTGATE. Business men! Rattled! I wonder what young Mr. Pillin there says to that.

BOB PILLIN. Er, I'm not in—er—a position to—er—state.

MR. WESTGATE. Well, that's not very conclusive. Perhaps you'll say I'm rattled too. [OLD HEYTHORP *nods*] Well, rattled or not, I think it's a rash purchase in times like these. We're in the trough of the sea.

HEYTHORP. Always buy at the bottom of the market.

MR. WESTGATE. And who's to tell we're there? We're losin' our trade hand over hand. The Germans are buildin' us out o' house and home; and the Yanks are goin' ahead like the very devil.

HEYTHORP. The Old Country's sound enough.

MR. WESTGATE. Well, I can see no signs of it.

[A SHAREHOLDER *in the front row rises.*

FARNEY. Mr. Winkley.

MR. WINKLEY. [*Lean and cautious*] I agree, Sir, with Mr. Westgate. I can see nothing in the present condition of shipping which calls for confidence. We are not a large company, and this proposed purchase will absorb at least two-thirds of our reserves. Beyond the dictum of the Chairman that freights will go up this year, where is the argument in favour of depleting ourselves in this way? I deprecate the proposal.

HEYTHORP. Any other shareholder anything to say before I put the Report to the meeting?

MR. BUDGEN. [*Rising*] Yes, Sir. Mr. Westgate requires answering.

FARNEY. Name, please?

SHAREHOLDER. Budgen.

HEYTHORP. Mr. Budgen.

MR. BUDGEN. I don't like this business either. I don't impute anything to anybody, but I don't like the short notice we've 'ad, nor the way the thing's pressed on us. Not only that, but, to say truth, I'm not satisfied to be galloped over in this fashion by one who, whatever he may have been in the past, is now clearly not in his prime.

A certain sensation. OLD HEYTHORP *looks over his shoulder at* FARNEY, *who heaves him up from behind.*

HEYTHORP. [*Voice low*] My best services have been at your disposal nineteen years; my experience of shipping is a little greater than that of the three gentlemen who spoke last. [*Voice suddenly rises*] If I'm not in my prime, my brain's solid and my heart's stout. "There is a tide in the affairs of limited companies"—I'm not content to stagnate. If *you* want to stagnate, give your support to these gentlemen, and have done with it. But I repeat, freights will go up before the end of the year. The purchase is sound, more than sound—it's a dam' fine one; and I stand or fall by it. [*He sinks back into his seat.*]

A pause. Then an old pink GENTLEMAN *in the second row rises.*

FARNEY. Mr. Appleby.

MR. APPLEBY. It has been painful to me—painful—and I have no doubt to others, to hear an attack made on the Chairman. If he is old in body, he is young in mental vigour and courage. I wish we were all as young. We ought to support him, gentlemen; most certainly we ought to support him.

OLD HEYTHORP *bows, and* MR. APPLEBY *bows and sits down.*

VENTNOR. [*Rising*] We don't want sentiment interfering with our judgment in this matter. The question is simply: How are our pockets to be affected? I came here with some misgiving. [*In a rather queer voice*] I can't say I've lost it; but on the whole—I say on the whole—I favour the proposition. The ships are undoubtedly very cheap. We've got these reserves, and we might as well use them. [*A pause*] The Chairman knows his way about. [*He sits down.*]

HEYTHORP. Any more remarks? [*Heaved up*] Very well, I move the adoption of the Report and accounts.

MR. BROWNBEE. I second that.

HEYTHORP. Those in favour signify the same in the usual way.

Except MR. WESTGATE, MR. BUDGEN, *and one other, all hold up their hands.*

HEYTHORP. Contrary?

MR. BUDGEN *and the other hold up their hands.*

MR. WESTGATE *does not.*

HEYTHORP. Carried. Only other business, gentlemen, is the election of a director in place of Mr. Popham who retires, and offers himself for re-election.

Mr. Popham's not here to-day—indisposed. [*Voice going again*] Very valuable director. Those in favour of his re-election?

All hands are held up except MR. BROWNBEE'S *and* MR. WESTGATE'S.

Contrary? [*No hands are held up*] Carried. All the business, gentlemen.

The meeting breaks up. BOB PILLIN *is first out of the room.*

The DIRECTORS *file out into the inner office.*

The REPORTER *rises and comes to* FARNEY.

REPORTER. Name of the last speaker but one—Applepie, was it?

FARNEY. Appleby.

REPORTER. Oh! Haythorp—with an "a"?

FARNEY. "E."

REPORTER. Oh! an "e." He seems an old man. Thank you. Would you like to see a proof? With an "a" you said——?

FARNEY. "E."

REPORTER. Oh! an "e." Oh! Good afternoon!

FARNEY. [*To* MR. BROWNBEE, *who is lingering*] Fancy his not knowing how to spell the Chairman's name after all these years! What does go on inside them?

MR. BROWNBEE. Indeed, yes. The Press is very peculiar—they seem to have no—no passions. I hope I was useful, Mr. Farney. That fellow Westgate was very unpleasant.

FARNEY. Yes, Sir, he wants to come on the Board.

MR. BROWNBEE. [*Who also does*] Ah! Indeed! Ah! I see.

FARNEY. Yes, Sir; always kicks up a fuss—hopes they'll put him on to keep him quiet.

MR. BROWNBEE. Dear, dear! And will they?

FARNEY. [*With a smile*] Not while the Chairman lives, Sir. He prefers the other way—services rendered.

MR. BROWNBEE. [*Pleased*] Ah-h! Yes, I'm glad to hear that. Yes. I suppose there isn't a question of another director at the moment?

FARNEY. I believe not, Sir. But, of course, it's always the unexpected that happens.

MR. BROWNBEE. I know, I know. One must be prepared for everything. I thought that—er—well—that possibly *I*—I think the Chairman would favour me— [*Here he catches sight of Ventnor, who has approached*] But this, perhaps, isn't the moment. On the whole a pleasant meeting. Good afternoon!

He goes, FARNEY *looking after him with a smile. The room is now empty but for* VENTNOR *and* FARNEY.

VENTNOR. So *he* wants to get on the Board. The old fox! Can I see the Chairman, Mr. Farney?

Before FARNEY *can answer, a* CLERK *announces from the outer office:* "MR. PILLIN, Sir!" JOE PILLIN *enters, nipped and yellow and wrapped to the nose in a fur coat.* FARNEY *goes into the inner office.*

VENTNOR. How de do, Mr. Pillin? I know your son. So we've bought your ships. Hope they'll do

us some good. But I suppose you hope they won't, or you wouldn't have sold. One man's meat——

JOE PILLIN. Mr. Ventnor, I think? Thank you. Very cold, isn't it?

FARNEY. [*Returning: to* VENTNOR] Will you wait in here, Sir? The Chairman will see you presently.

VENTNOR *goes into the outer office, and* FARNEY *follows him, as* OLD HEYTHORP *comes in.*

JOE PILLIN. [*Quavering*] Ah! Sylvanus? Aren't you perished?

HEYTHORP. What a quavering thread-paper of a chap you are, Joe! Take off your coat.

JOE PILLIN. I? I should be lost without my fur. You must have a fire inside you.

HEYTHORP. Sound innards, nothing more.

JOE PILLIN. [*Nervously scrutinising the closed doors*] So—it's gone through, Sylvanus? It means a wretched price for me—wretched.

HEYTHORP. You may think yourself damned lucky, Joe. Brought that deed?

JOE PILLIN. [*Nervously produces a parchment and unfolds it on the little table to show his signature*] Yes. And I've—I've signed it. I don't like it—it's irrevocable. I can't bear irrevocable things. Never could. I consider you stampeded me, Sylvanus—playing on my nerves like that.

HEYTHORP. Your lawyer must think you a sad dog, Joe.

JOE PILLIN. Ah! suppose it comes to the knowledge of my wife at my death!

HEYTHORP. Nothing'll make you shiver then.

JOE PILLIN. Really! That's very bad taste, Sylvanus. Well, you've got your way, you always do. Who is this Mrs. Larne? It seems my son met them here yesterday. I thought at least nobody knew you were connected with them.

HEYTHORP. Mother of my grandchildren under the rose, Joe; and you've provided for 'em—best thing you ever did.

JOE PILLIN. [*Pocketing the deed*] Oh! I'm sorry you told me. It's worse than I thought. It's a clear breach of trust on your part—there's no question; and I'm conniving at it. As soon as the transfer of the ships is signed, I shall get away abroad. This cold's killing me. I wish you'd give me your recipe for keeping warm.

HEYTHORP. Get a new inside, and drink port.

JOE PILLIN. And yet, I suppose, with your full habit, your life hangs by a thread?

HEYTHORP. Stout one, my boy.

JOE PILLIN. Well, good-bye, Sylvanus. You're a Job's comforter. I must be getting home. I don't like it.

HEYTHORP. Then lump it.

JOE PILLIN *puts on his hat, and goes.* FARNEY *enters.*

FARNEY. Will you see Mr. Ventnor now, Sir?

[OLD HEYTHORPS *nods.* VENTNOR *enters.*

VENTNOR. Things are looking up with you, Mr. Heythorp.

OLD HEYTHORP *looks at him deeply without reply.*

Your creditors put their tails between their legs yesterday, thanks to Mr. Brownbee. And you've carried your purchase through to-day—thanks to me.

HEYTHORP. Come to your point, Sir, if you've got one.

VENTNOR. Oh! yes, I've got one. You had your way, Mr. Heythorp, but the meeting to-day might have turned very nasty. You rode roughshod; but, as you saw, I'm not the only one, by a long way, who feels that a Chairman ought to be in full possession of his faculties. If the shareholders to-day had turned you down, where would you have been?

HEYTHORP. In the soup. But they didn't.

VENTNOR. No, they just didn't. But there wasn't much in it. I could have turned the scales against you instead of for. And if they'd thrown you over, your other companies would shelve you too. Your position, Mr. Heythorp, if I may say so, is precarious, in spite of the way you carry it off.

HEYTHORP. Will you come to the point, Sir?

VENTNOR. Yes. It's this: Am I to make it more precarious?

HEYTHORP. How?

VENTNOR. By filing a petition for your bankruptcy. That would be quite enough to tip the beam.

HEYTHORP. File away!

VENTNOR. You won't pay me, then?

HEYTHORP. No.

VENTNOR. Is that wise, Mr. Heythorp—is it wise? Take time. Think it over. By the way, you put the case for that purchase very high, didn't you?

HEYTHORP. [*Looking at him steadily*] Not a bit too high. Freights have touched bottom—go up soon.

VENTNOR. D'you know what passed through my mind?

HEYTHORP. Not an idea.

VENTNOR. [*Smiling*] And you won't reconsider your refusal?

HEYTHORP. [*With rising choler*] You heard the sporting way they treated me yesterday. Let 'em down by giving you preference? Not for Joe!

VENTNOR. Mr. Heythorp, you've had your way all your life, I fancy——

HEYTHORP. Wish I had.

VENTNOR. And it's given you the idea that you can always have it. Well, Humpty Dumpty had a great fall—not all the King's horses nor all the King's men—remember the old rhyme?

HEYTHORP. You're good enough to be mysterious, Sir.

VENTNOR. Once more, won't you reconsider——?

HEYTHORP. My answer's flat: I'll see you damned first.

VENTNOR. Very good, Mr. Heythorp! Very good indeed! To our next meeting, then. You've not heard the last of this. Good-day. [*He goes to the door.*]

HEYTHORP. Good-day to you!

[VENTNOR *goes out.*

HEYTHORP. [*To himself, rumbling*] That cur smells a rat. [*He moves very slowly to the inner office door and calls*] Mr. Farney!

[FARNEY *enters.*

HEYTHORP. Bring me my hat and coat.

[FARNEY *brings them.*

Get me a taxi-cab; tell the driver Millicent Villas; if he doesn't know it, let him ask.

FARNEY. Yes, Sir. [*Helping him on with his coat.*]

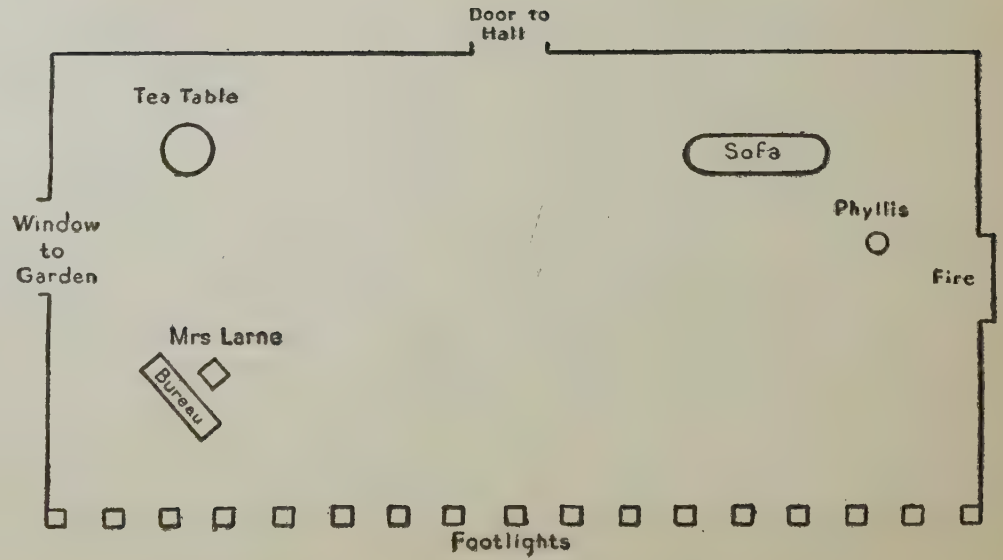
HEYTHORP. That chap Ventnor. What's his holding?

FARNEY. Nothing to speak of, Sir. Ten shares, I believe.

He goes out. OLD HEYTHORP *slowly puts on his hat.*

CURTAIN.

ACT II


Door to Hall
Tea Table
Sofa
Window to Garden
Phyllis
Fire
Mrs Larne
Bureau
Footlights

ACT II

The Larnes' small drawing-room at Millicent Villas, about three-thirty the same afternoon. A general effect of subdued disorder and chintz. A deep-cushioned sofa; a tea table with not only tea-things, but a liqueur bottle, glasses, and cigarette box on it. Water-colours by Mrs. Larne on the walls; an untidy bureau, Right. A cheerful fire, Left, and on the fender before it PHYLLIS *drying her hair. A garden window, Right. A door, Back.* MRS. LARNE, *at her bureau in a negligée, is scribbling furiously and smoking a cigarette.*

[*Enter* LETTY, *the little Maid-of-all-work.*

LETTY. [*Holding out a bill to* MRS. LARNE] Gas, ma'am. And he's goin' to cut it off to-morrer.

MRS. LARNE. [*With a puff of smoke and a gesture of despair*] That man's incorrigible!

LETTY. The water's been, again.

MRS. LARNE. [*With dignity*] Next time he comes, I'll see him, myself.

LETTY. Yes, ma'am—he ain't goin' away next time, 'e says, till you 'ave.

MRS. LARNE. Their impudence!

LETTY. Ah! 'e's a caution. Never knew such a man for not takin' no for an answer.

MRS. LARNE. [*With her laugh*] He'll take it from me, Letty.

LETTY. Yus, an' turn the water off. What for supper, please?

MRS. LARNE. Oh! something light. Use your wits.

LETTY. The cold bacon?

PHYLLIS. Ugh-h!

MRS. LARNE. [*Dreamily*] Yes! Delicious.

LETTY. There ain't nothin' else.

MRS. LARNE. [*Scribbling*] Exactly. Don't worry me.

LETTY. Laundry's comin' at six.

MRS. LARNE *continues to scribble;* PHYLLIS, *drying her hair, pays sudden attention.*

PHYLLIS. The laundry, mother. I must have my things back. I'm down to my last com.

MRS. LARNE. Tt, tt! It'll be all right. Where's Jock?

LETTY. In the kitchen, ma'am—'e's thinkin'!

MRS. LARNE. Well, don't let him. [*Impressively*] And mind! He's not to come in here. I'm expecting Mr. Pillin at half-past. Go and dress, Letty.

LETTY. 'Im with the 'igh collar—same as yesterday?

MRS. LARNE. [*With her laugh*] Gracious! What a way of putting it.

[PHYLLIS *sneezes.*

LETTY. Ain't your 'air dry, Miss?

PHYLLIS. No.

LETTY. Will you want tea, ma'am?

MRS. LARNE. [*Scribbling*] Of course!

LETTY. Shan't be able to bile no kettle to-morrer.

MRS. LARNE. Make tea while the gas burns. Run away, you awful little drumstick. I shall never get this article finished.

LETTY. I'll try and sneak one from the basket, Miss, when 'er 'ead's turned-like. She won't leave nothin' if she ain't paid this time.

[*She goes out.*

PHYLLIS. Mother!

MRS. LARNE. [*Conning*] "She had on black moiré, with teeny tucks and flounces, and a flame-coloured fillet. There was a *je ne sais quoi* in the general effect. Lady Baker, on the other hand——"

PHYLLIS. *Mother!*

MRS. LARNE. What?

PHYLLIS. That young man!

MRS. LARNE. Well, what about him?

PHYLLIS. It's horrible to borrow from people you've only seen once.

MRS. LARNE. Well! you're not going to, I hope.

PHYLLIS. No, but you are.

MRS. LARNE. Will you hold your tongue, you disrespectful gairl!

PHYLLIS. I can't, mother. I hate it!

MRS. LARNE. There it is! I slave for you children, I beg for you. I wear myself to the bone——

PHYLLIS. Mother!

MRS. LARNE. [*With a large sigh, and her hand on her ample bosom*] Well, almost—yes, I can feel one

rib. I never knew such ingratitude. "Lady Baker, on the other hand, filled the eye"—You've put it all out of my head—what did she fill the eye with? How do you think I'm to keep a roof over us?

PHYLLIS. I don't want a roof kept over me by borrowing.

MRS. LARNE. [*Sarcastically*] Oh! no. Of course not!—"filled the eye with red velvet."—There! I don't know whether it was red velvet or not. I wonder [*musing*] is "red velvet" libellous? I write this stuff—I—I—an artist—It's too hard! [*She wipes her eye with a tiny handkerchief.*]

PHYLLIS. [*Going to her*] Mother—don't! I didn't mean—only I do so loathe it. Father *was* a gentleman, wasn't he?

MRS. LARNE. I suppose you mean I'm not a lady? 'Pon my word!

PHYLLIS. Oh! Mother, I *know* you're descended from the Cornish kings. Well, I think we ought to live up to it. Look here, I'll sell my hair.

MRS. LARNE. You'll what? What d'you think you'd look like without your hair?

PHYLLIS. [*Darkly*] Like enough for *that* young man.

MRS. LARNE. I never met a gairl who said such things—never.

PHYLLIS. Well, of course, I know what he's coming for. I won't be a decoy duck, mother. If you borrow from him, I'll steal it from you, and pay it back. I will!

MRS. LARNE. Of all ungrateful little wretches!

[PHYLLIS *rubs her cheek against her mother's.* No! Go away!

PHYLLIS. Mum, don't be grumpsy!

Her mother has taken out a little mirror, and is looking at herself. PHYLLIS *takes a peep.*

PHYLLIS. [*Rubbing her own cheek*] Oh! it's come off on me.

MRS. LARNE. You little cat!

[*The front door-bell is heard to ring.* Good gracious, there he is! And look at me—look at me! [*She gathers herself up and swims to the door. Her voice is heard in the passage saying*] Don't open, Letty, till I'm invisible.

PHYLLIS *takes the little mirror to the window, for the light is failing, and rubs her cheek more vigorously. Through the open door she can hear voices.*

BOB PILLIN. Er—Mrs. Larne at home?

LETTY. Yes, Sir—but she's invisible.

BOB PILLIN. Ha'r! I'm sorry.

LETTY. Miss Phyllis is at 'ome, Sir.

BOB PILLIN. Er—her! Wonder if she'd see me?

LETTY. She's been washin' 'er 'air, but it may be dry be now. I'll see.

LETTY *enters. She is in black with an apron.*

LETTY. It's *'im*, Miss. Will you see 'im?

PHYLLIS. Oh! Gefoozlem! In a jiff.

She hands LETTY *the mirror, tears open the window, and disappears into the garden.*

LETTY. [*At the door*] Come in. She'll see you in a jiff. Oh! and Master Jock's loose, Sir.

BOB PILLIN. [*Coming in*] Is he—ah!

LETTY *takes his cane from him and gives him the little mirror, looks round, takes a towel from the fender, and retires.*

BOB PILLIN *is beautifully dressed, with a narrow white piping round his waistcoat, a buttonhole of tuberoses, and his hat still in one hand. He stands uneasily twisting the little mirror, then lifts it and examines his face.*

PHYLLIS. [*Opening the door*] Oh! Conceited young man! [*Her hair is fluffed out on her shoulders, and the sight of it is almost too much for* BOB PILLIN.]

BOB PILLIN. I say, how topping!

PHYLLIS. [*Shaking her mane*] Lawks! It's awful. Have you come to see mother?

BOB PILLIN. Er-r—yes; I'm glad she's not here, though.

PHYLLIS. Don't be foolish! Sit down! [*She sits on the sofa and taps it; he sits beside her*] Isn't washing one's head awful?

BOB PILLIN. Er—well! Of course, I haven't much experience.

PHYLLIS. I said head—not hair! [*A pause*] Why do you know such frightful men?

BOB PILLIN. What! I don't know any frightful men.

PHYLLIS. You know that man who was at Guardy's yesterday—I saw you. He's a horror.

BOB PILLIN. Ventnor—oh! Well, I only just know him. What's the matter with him?

PHYLLIS. He's mother's lawyer. Mother doesn't mind him—but I think he's a beast.

BOB PILLIN. Why? What's he done?

PHYLLIS. It isn't what he's done. It's what he'd like to do. Isn't money horrible?

BOB PILLIN. Well, I don't know, I think money's rather a good thing.

PHYLLIS. Oh! do you? Well, you'd better take care of what you've got then, or you won't have it.

BOB PILLIN. [*Staring at her*] Look here, Miss Larne —er—Phyllis—look here!

PHYLLIS. Well, I'm looking.

BOB PILLIN. Isn't there something on your mind, or—or something?

PHYLLIS. [*Shaking her mane, then looking down*] I wish mother wouldn't—I hate it. Beastly!

BOB PILLIN. Really—I mean—if there's anything you want me to do.

PHYLLIS. Yes, go away before mother comes.

BOB PILLIN. Why?

PHYLLIS. Oh! you know. You've got eyes. Why d'you think you're here?

BOB PILLIN. Really—I don't know.

PHYLLIS. [*Scanning him*] I thought you were an up-to-date young man.

BOB PILLIN. [*Modestly—settling his tie*] Well—er—I've knocked about a bit.

PHYLLIS. It hasn't knocked the bloom off, has it?

BOB PILLIN. [*Taking out his buttonhole*] Ah! I say, do have these!

PHYLLIS. [*Wrinkling her nose*] Not for worlds.

BOB PILLIN. I think you might tell me what's the matter with you.

PHYLLIS. [*Almost fiercely*] Well, I will! Can't you see what a poky street we live in? We're always hard up.

BOB PILLIN. What a beastly shame!

PHYLLIS. Nobody can come here without—disgusting! [*She turns away from him, almost in tears.*]

BOB PILLIN. I say! What is it?

PHYLLIS. Oh! if you can't see, I'm not going to tell you.

BOB PILLIN. Well, I'm damned!

PHYLLIS. [*Glancing through her lashes*] That's better!

BOB PILLIN. Look here! Er—Phyllis! I came here to see *you.*

PHYLLIS. [*Nodding, gravely*] Exactly!

BOB PILLIN. Do you object—really—I wouldn't for the world do anything you don't like.

PHYLLIS. Then you'd better go, or you will. [*She sneezes*] My hair isn't a bit dry. [*She sits on the fender again before the fire*] Well! Aren't you going?

BOB PILLIN. You don't really mean it, do you? [*He breathes with rising emotion.*]

PHYLLIS. [*After a pause*] Oh! don't breathe so loud!

BOB PILLIN. [*Indignant*] Breathe! I wasn't breathing.

PHYLLIS. You were.

BOB PILLIN. I wasn't—— Well, I can stand anything from you. You see I've taken the knock.

PHYLLIS. What! Where?

BOB PILLIN. [*Touching his breast pocket*] Here.

PHYLLIS. Oh! Does it hurt?

BOB PILLIN. Yes, awfully. It kept me awake all last night.

PHYLLIS. That's why you look so woolly.

BOB PILLIN. You're making it rather hard for me, aren't you? You see I've seen a good deal of—er—life.

PHYLLIS. Oh! *Do* tell me!

BOB PILLIN. Well, er—no—I think—not.

PHYLLIS. That's mean.

BOB PILLIN. What I meant was that—er—seeing—er—you is so different. I mean it's like—er—going out of a—er—into a—er.

PHYLLIS. [*Softly*] Poor young man!

BOB PILLIN. Look here! What I came to say chiefly was: Will you all come to the theatre with me tomorrow night? I've got a box.

PHYLLIS. [*Jumping up and clapping her hands*] What larks! We jolly well will! That is, if—I say, d'you mind—I *must* just go and see that my white petticoat. [*Stops at the door*] You see, the laundress is an awful beast. She *will* be paid.

[*She runs out.*

BOB PILLIN *waits ecstatically. It is not* PHYLLIS, *however, who comes back, but* MRS. LARNE, *richly attired, and breathing perfume.*

MRS. LARNE. [*Greeting him*] Ah! Has my naughty gairl been making you comfortable, Mr. Pillin?

BOB PILLIN. Ha'r! Oh! Quite.

MRS. LARNE. Do you really want us to go to the theatre to-morrow? How nice of you! I should have loved it, but—[*Motioning him to the sofa*] Come and sit down. We poor Bohemians, my dear young man, you can't conceive how we live from hand to mouth. Just imagine—that poor gairl of mine hasn't anything to go in. D'you know, I simply don't know where to turn. [*With a heavy sigh*] An artist can't be business-like, and put by for this, that, and the other. And they take such advantage of one. You know those Midland Syndicate people— No, of course you don't —you're one of those rich young men who own ships and things, aren't you?

BOB PILLIN. Well, my father does—as a matter of fact, we've just sold our ships.

MRS. LARNE. How delightful! What a lovely lot of money you must have! [*Absent-mindedly taking his hand and putting it to her head and heart*] *My* poor ships are all here and here, and they don't sell—isn't it tragic? And that gairl of mine absolutely adores the theatre. If I only had the price of a dress for her on me, as the dear old cabbies say. Of course *I* should be in rags, myself. And in a box—everybody sees you. Still, you wouldn't mind that. But my lovely gairl—because she is lovely, isn't she?

BOB PILLIN. [*More and more hypnotised*] But I say, you know, if it's only that——

MRS. LARNE. *Only!* If you knew how rich that

sounds! I can't bear money—it's in my blood, I suppose. And yet, you know, every day I find it more and more impossible to live without it.

BOB PILLIN. But, Mrs. Larne—look here—you know, I mean—what's money? [*He dives his hands into his breast pocket.*]

MRS. LARNE. [*Apparently oblivious*] You see, I never can help paying my debts. It's almost a disease with me; hereditary. [*Watching out of the corner of her eye the slow, mesmerised appearance of a cheque-book*] My dear young man, whatever's that?

BOB PILLIN. Oh!—er—I thought perhaps—but of course, if you——

MRS. LARNE. If you only knew what it was to see a cheque-book with so many cheques in it! It gives me the most perfect feeling, here. [*She lays her hand on her heart.*]

BOB PILLIN. Then won't you let me—er——

But during the foregoing PHYLLIS *has softly opened the door, Back, and appears, pushing* JOCK *before her. He ducks and creeps on hands and feet to the sofa; then raises himself suddenly till his face appears over the top like a full moon between his mother and* BOB PILLIN. BOB PILLIN *drops the cheque-book and his mouth falls open.* MRS. LARNE *clasps her bosom.*

MRS. LARNE. You awful boy! How dare you?

She turns and sees PHYLLIS. BOB PILLIN *also turns, and sheepishly pockets the cheque-book.* PHYLLIS *comes circling round to the*

fire and stands with her back to it, eyeing them. MRS. LARNE *has nipped* JOCK *by the ear.*

MRS. LARNE. This boy of mine will be the death of us, Mr. Pillin.

JOCK. I say—that hurts!

MRS. LARNE. [*Smoothly*] I mean it to.

PHYLLIS. [*Meaningly*] Mother, *I* put him up to it.

MRS. LARNE. [*Releasing* JOCK, *and with a gesture of despair*] Well, I give it up. When I'm dead of work and anxiety, you'll both be sorry. [*To* BOB PILLIN] Are we going to have supper before or after, Mr. Pillin?

BOB PILLIN. Oh!—er—both—don't you think? Er—her!

JOCK. I say, you are a topper! Have some toffee? [*He holds out a substance.*]

PHYLLIS. Look out, young man; it looks exactly like, but it's beeswax.

BOB PILLIN. [*Gazing at it*] Oh! I say!

JOCK *jabs it promptly into his opened mouth, and flies. He is met at the door, however, by* LETTY.

LETTY. Mr. Aesop.

OLD HEYTHORP, *slow as fate, in his overcoat, hat in hand, advances into the room, and the boy* JOCK *backs before him, bowing low, as to an idol.* MRS. LARNE *hastens to greet him,* PHYLLIS *too.* BOB PILLIN, *risen, is removing beeswax.*

LETTY. [*Sotto voce*] Kettle's bilin'.

MRS. LARNE. [*Majestically*] Tea, Letty.

They settle OLD HEYTHORP *on the sofa, whence he stares up at* BOB PILLIN, *and gives him a curt nod.*

BOB PILLIN. How are you, Sir? Saw you at the meeting.

HEYTHORP. How did *you* come here?

BOB PILLIN. [*Disconcerted*] Oh!—er—just dropped in.

MRS. LARNE. Guardy dear, you *must* try our new liqueur. Jock, get Guardy a glass.

The boy JOCK, *having put a glass to his eye, fills it rapidly.*

MRS. LARNE. You horrible boy! You could see that glass has been used.

JOCK. Oh! sorry, mother. *I'll* get rid of it. [*He drinks off the liqueur.*]

MRS. LARNE. [*Laughing*] Guardy, what am I to do with him?

PHYLLIS, *who has taken* JOCK *by the ear to lead him from the room, suddenly drops him with a squeal and claps her hand to her arm. He has run a pin into her.* BOB PILLIN *hastens to her.*

MRS. LARNE. Aren't those children awful? [*Lowering her voice*] Jock takes after you terribly, Guardy. Jock, come here. Look at the shape of his head.

The boy JOCK *approaches and stands seraphically gazing at* OLD HEYTHORP. *He is seized by feigned terror and, falling on to the stool before the fire, sits there grinning and*

cross-legged with his eyes fixed on OLD HEYTHORP.

MRS. LARNE. He has absolutely no reverence. Jock, take Mr. Pillin and show him your rats. And Phyllis, do hurry up the tea, there's a dear girl.

[*At the word "Rats"* JOCK *has risen.*

JOCK. Oh! ah! Come on! They only bite if you worry them. You needn't worry them if you don't like.

BOB PILLIN, *seeing that* PHYLLIS *is leaving the room, follows* JOCK *out.*

HEYTHORP. Making up to that young pup, are you?

MRS. LARNE. He's such a nice fellow. We like him ever so. Guardy, I'm sure your coming means good news.

HEYTHORP. Settled six thousand on the children.

MRS. LARNE. Guardy! [*She becomes thoughtful*] On the children——?

HEYTHORP. Yes. *You* can't blew it, so don't try!

MRS. LARNE. How unkind! As if——!

HEYTHORP. Scriven, the lawyer, will pay you the income till they come of age or marry. Sixty pounds a quarter. Now! *Ask no questions—not a word to anyone.*

MRS. LARNE. Of course not! But—quarterly—when will the first——?

HEYTHORP. Lady Day.

MRS. LARNE. Nearly six weeks? This isn't in place of the three hundred you give us, Guardy?

HEYTHORP. No—additional.

MRS. LARNE. How sweet of you!

HEYTHORP. Humbug!

MRS. LARNE. Guardy!

HEYTHORP. About young Pillin. She mustn't be grabbed up by any fool who comes along.

MRS. LARNE. Oh! the dear gairl is *much* too young. He's quite harmless; a nice simple fellow.

HEYTHORP. Drop him! Not a word of this settlement to anyone.

MRS. LARNE. N-no, Guardy. But I am so pressed. Couldn't I have twenty-five in advance?

OLD HEYTHORP *shakes his head; she throws up her hands in despair, but as* LETTY *comes in with the tea, followed by* PHYLLIS, *a thought strikes her.*

Come and give Guardy tea, Phyllis. I've forgotten something; I must just telephone.

PHYLLIS. Can't I, mother?

MRS. LARNE. No; Guardy wants you. Back in a minute.

[*She goes out behind* LETTY.

PHYLLIS. [*At the tea table*] Tea, Guardy?

[OLD HEYTHORP *shakes his head.*

D'you mind if I do? I've been washing my hair, it makes you frightfully hungry. [*Uncovering a dish*] Geewhiz! Crumpets! Guardy, just one crumpet?

[OLD HEYTHORP *shakes his head.*

[*Filling her mouth with a crumpet*] Scrummy! Lucky Jock didn't know. Was our Dad like Jock? Mother's always so mysterious about him. I suppose you knew *his* father well? [*She sits down beside him on the sofa.*]

HEYTHORP. Man about London in my day.

PHYLLIS. Oh! your day must have been jolly. Did you wear peg-top trousers, and Dundrearys, and ride in the Row?

[OLD HEYTHORP *nods.*

What larks! And I suppose you had lots of adventures with opera dancers and gambling? The young men are all so good now. That young man, for instance, is a perfect stick of goodness.

[OLD HEYTHORP *grunts.*

You wouldn't know how good he was unless you'd sat next him going through a tunnel. Yesterday, coming home with us, he had his waist squeezed, and he simply sat still. And then, when the tunnel ended, it was Jock, after all, not me. His face was—— Oh! ah! ha, ha! he!

OLD HEYTHORP *contemplates her charming throat, thrown back in laughter, with a sort of pride in his face.*

He likes to pretend, of course, that he's fearfully lively. He's going to take us to the theatre to-morrow night, and give us *two* suppers. Won't it be lummy? Only [*With a sigh*] I haven't anything to go in.

OLD HEYTHORP *begins to fumble in his breast pocket.*

PHYLLIS. Isn't money beastly, Guardy? If one could put out a plate over night and have just enough in the morning to use during the day!

HEYTHORP. [*Fumbling out a note and putting it in her lap*] Little present for you—buy a dress—don't tell your mother.

PHYLLIS. Ten pounds! How *lovely!* You *are* a chook. [*She throws her arms round him, and bobs her lips against his nose. Sitting back and contemplating him*] To-morrow's Valentine's Day. Guardy, you've got the grand manner. Do tell me about that Yankee. *Where* did you wing him?

HEYTHORP. At Dieppe.

PHYLLIS. No, but where *on* him?

HEYTHORP. Where he couldn't sit down afterwards.

PHYLLIS. Was he turning his back?

HEYTHORP. Side view.

PHYLLIS. Oh! Yes, of course! Why did you fight the duel?

HEYTHORP. Said old England was played out.

PHYLLIS. Fifty years ago? [OLD HEYTHORP *nods*] But, she's still full of beans, isn't she?

HEYTHORP. And always will be.

PHYLLIS. That's what I think—look at Jock, for instance.

[OLD HEYTHORP *looks at her instead.*

Why d'you look at me like that, Guardy?

HEYTHORP. You're more like your father than Jock. Listen! When you come of age, you'll have a hundred and twenty a year of your own that you can't get rid of. Don't ever be persuaded into doing what you don't want. Don't marry a fool for his money. And remember: your mother's a sieve—no good giving her anything; keep what you'll get for yourself—only a pittance, you'll want it all, every mag.

PHYLLIS. Mother's a darling, really, Guardy.

HEYTHORP. H'm! I daresay. Only one thing in life matters—independence. Lose that, lose everything. Get old like me, you'll find that out. Keep your independence—only value of money. And—that young pup—'ware fools! Help me up!

PHYLLIS *helps him up and puts his hat on her own head; it comes down right over the ears.*

PHYLLIS. [*Enchanted*] Oh! Guardy! What a whopper! You *must* have a big head! They're all so small now. I shall marry someone with a head like yours. [*Pensively*] I do wonder about that young man. I bet he's got the dead rat down his back by now. And isn't it niffy! Jock was keeping it for something special. [*She wrinkles her nose and plants the hat on* OLD HEYTHORP] Why! It only just goes on. *Must* you go? I do love you to come. [*With a sudden warm impulse*] And I do love you altogether! [*She trembles up close to him.*]

HEYTHORP. [*Patting her cheek*] That's right! Be a good girl. And don't tell your mother what I've been saying. Shall enjoy my dinner to-night.

PHYLLIS. Don't you always? I always think of you having *such* a good dinner. You look like it, you know.

HEYTHORP. Got a daughter. Mustn't eat, mustn't drink! Always at me.

PHYLLIS. Oh! yes, we saw her in the distance. She looked too good for anything.

HEYTHORP. That's the trouble.

PHYLLIS. Is she married?

HEYTHORP. No.

PHYLLIS. Why not?

HEYTHORP. Too holy.

PHYLLIS. [*At the window*] I thought so—Jock's pinned it to his coat behind, and he can't tell [*Fingers pinching her nose*] where it's coming from. Oh! poor young man! Oh, well, that's all right! He's safe for to-day—nobody'll be able to go near him. They're coming in. Guardy, would you mind taking him away with you in your cab?—you can smoke a cigar, you know. I'll light it for you. [*She feels in his pockets, finds his cigar case, gives him a cigar and lights it*] There! It's a good strong cigar. [*At the window*] Oh! he's found it out. There it goes, over the wall! Thank goodness! Now, look out, smoke! [*She dives for a cigarette from the table and lights it*] Good-bye, Guardy darling, I'm off. I know that rat.

[*She sidles to the door as* BOB PILLIN *comes in.*

HEYTHORP. Give you a lift if you're going my way.

BOB PILLIN. [*Looking at* PHYLLIS] Well, Sir, I wasn't thinking of——

PHYLLIS. Oh! yes he is. Guardy; he *is*.

BOB PILLIN. [*Taken aback*] Oh! ah! Tha-anks, then.

[PHYLLIS *vanishes.*

HEYTHORP. Make the most of your opportunities, I see.

BOB PILLIN. I—I don't know what you mean, Sir. Mrs. Larne is very kind.

HEYTHORP. No doubt. Don't try and pick the flowers, that's all.

BOB PILLIN. [*With some dignity*] Are you a relative of theirs, Sir?

[OLD HEYTHORP *nods.*

I quite understand what you mean. But I should like to know what your objection to me is.

HEYTHORP. Milk-and-water masquerading as port wine.

BOB PILLIN. [*Outraged*] Awfully sorry, Sir, if you don't think I'm wild enough. Anything I can do for you in that line—be most happy. I—er—know I'm not in debt, no entanglements, got a decent income, pretty good expectations and that; but I can soon put that all right, if I'm not fit without.

HEYTHORP. [*After a silence during which he puffs sturdily*] Fatter, but no more sand than your father.

He leads out, and BOB PILLIN, *hypnotised by such very plain speech, is following, when* MRS. LARNE *enters.*

MRS. LARNE. Oh! are you going, Guardy? [HEYTHORP *nods*] And you, Mr. Pillin—we haven't half——

BOB PILLIN. Awfully sorry—find I've got to. I'll send you a line about to-morrow.

MRS. LARNE *is almost securing his lappel, when her nose apprehends something, and she refrains.* BOB PILLIN *slides out behind* OLD HEYTHORP.

MRS. LARNE. [*To herself*] Dear me! what a peculiar——! [*She wrinkles her nose, then goes to her bureau, sits down, sighs profoundly, and takes up her pen*] "With

red velvet. The gathering was brilliant in the extreme." Oh, dear! What lies the papers do tell!

[PHYLLIS *enters.*

Ah! there you are, you naughty gairl. I've just telephoned to my lawyer to come round.

PHYLLIS. That horrid man! What d'you want him for, mother?

MRS. LARNE. What do I want him for? What do I want any man for? Money—money.

PHYLLIS. I wish Jock hadn't wasted that rat. I'm sure he's a beast.

MRS. LARNE. Now, Phyllis! I won't have you call him names. He's very nice for a lawyer. If *he* can't get me some money, we shall all have to go into the workhouse. I want you to be extra sweet to him.

PHYLLIS. Well, I can't.

MRS. LARNE. Then you'd better go upstairs.

PHYLLIS. I will when he comes. If he pretends to be nice—I know what it'll mean.

MRS. LARNE. And what is that?

PHYLLIS. That you're what he calls "a fine woman." Ugh! He's a horrid man!

MRS. LARNE. Can I help it if people admire me?

PHYLLIS. Of course we all admire you. Only *that* sort of man! I'm sure he never does anything for nothing.

MRS. LARNE. You're getting very knowing. [*With some dignity*] As a matter of fact, Guardy gave me some news, and I expect to be able to—er—use it for our benefit.

PHYLLIS. Guardy told *me*, too, mother.

MRS. LARNE. Oh! What?

PHYLLIS. That I shall have some money when I come of age, and that I wasn't to give—— But, Mummy, anything I ever have of course you'll have half.

MRS. LARNE. [*Putting our her hand*] Darling, I know. But by then there won't be any Mummy—she'll have wasted away. [*She sighs heavily*] Never mind!

"La vie est brève, un peu d'amour.
Un peu de rève, et puis bonjour!"

I wonder if I could work that in! [*Takes up her pen.*]

PHYLLIS. [*Producing the ten pound note, with a sigh*] Mum! Guardy gave me this to buy a dress. Would you like it?

MRS. LARNE. [*Touched*] Ducky! No! Waste it on those wretched tradesmen? You get yourself a lovely frock.

PHYLLIS. Oh! I said you were a darling!

[*Kisses her nose.*

MRS. LARNE. Listen! I believe that's his cab. Now, Phyllis, this is a crisis, and you must help me.

PHYLLIS. [*Regarding her*] Mother, I believe you love a crisis.

MRS. LARNE. Just open the door a weeny bit.

PHYLLIS. [*Doing so*] Why?

MRS. LARNE. Hssh!

VENTNOR'S *voice without:* Mrs. Larne at home?

MRS. LARNE. [*Under her breath*] It is.

LETTY'S *voice:* Can't say yet, depends on 'oo you are.

VENTNOR'S *voice:* I think she is, young woman.

LETTY'S *voice:* Are you about the water?

MRS. LARNE. [*Under her breath*] That awful little drumstick!

VENTNOR'S *voice:* Mr. Charles Ventnor, say! Give her this card.

LETTY'S *voice:* Just wait outside the door, will yer?

MRS. LARNE, *throwing up her hands, goes to the door.*

MRS. LARNE. Oh! Is that you, Mr. Ventnor? Do come in.

[VENTNOR *appears, hat in hand.*

Phyllis, dear, Mr. Ventnor.

[VENTNOR *bows smilingly,* PHYLLIS *nods.*

That appalling little drumstick of mine has got water on the brain. Such a faithful little soul! We Bohemians, you know, Mr. Ventnor——

VENTNOR. Precisely!

MRS. LARNE. Do sit down. [*He sits on the sofa*] Tea?—But I'm afraid it's cold. A glass of liqueur —it's really quite nice, and rather original in the afternoon, don't you think? [*Handing him a glass*] And do smoke; we smoke everywhere. Even that naughty gairl of mine smokes.

VENTNOR. No, thanks. [*Tasting the liqueur*] Very good tipple, Mrs. Larne. I came at some little inconvenience, so perhaps—— [*He glances at* PHYLLIS.]

PHYLLIS. All right!

[*She goes out without a look back.*

MRS. LARNE. [*Sitting down on the sofa beside him*] She's so abrupt, dear child. In my young days——

VENTNOR. [*Gallantly*] Your *young* days, Mrs. Larne. And what are these? But now—what is it?

MRS. LARNE. Well, as you know, my affairs are very embarrassed; but to-day I had some splendid news. A settlement has been made upon us—perfect Godsend, Mr. Ventnor, in the nick of time. Only of course I shan't get any interest from it till Lady Day. And, you see, I simply must have fifty pounds now—so I thought you would be so kind as to advance that on the security of this interest, charging, of course, what you like. It's quite ridiculous, but to-morrow I shall be without gas or coals, and probably have my furniture seized for rates. They are so hasty and unreasonable.

VENTNOR. [*Dubiously*] Settlement?

MRS. LARNE. Yes, I receive the income quarterly till my children are of age.

VENTNOR. How much?

MRS. LARNE. Six thousand pounds.

VENTNOR. Oh! [*Pricking his ears*] Who made it?

MRS. LARNE. Ah! well—that I'm *not* supposed to tell you.

VENTNOR. Six thousand—— [*To himself*] Sixty thousand—ten per cent——!

MRS. LARNE. Oh! no, not six thousand a year—that would be too heavenly; six thousand altogether.

VENTNOR. Quite!

MRS. LARNE. You can verify everything for yourself, of course. The lawyers are Messrs. Scriven.

VENTNOR. Not Crow & Donkin?

MRS. LARNE. No, the name was Scriven. Aren't they lawyers?

VENTNOR. Oh! certainly—very good firm. Very interesting news, Mrs. Larne. I thought Crow & Donkin because— [*Suddenly looking at her*] they're old Mr. Heythorp's solicitors.

MRS. LARNE. Ah! but you see I promised not to mention any names, except of course the solicitor's. If I didn't mention him, I could hardly expect you to lend me the money, could I?

VENTNOR. Afraid I must ask you to be more frank, Mrs. Larne. Mr. Heythorp *is* your late husband's father?

MRS. LARNE. Why? How *did* you know that?

VENTNOR. When you first came to see me, you spoke of his being behind you—remember? I confess I originally had a— [*With a look*] Well! a rather more intimate theory, but that didn't tally with my enquiries in Dublin.

MRS. LARNE. [*Flattering*] What a terrible man!

VENTNOR. Ah! We lawyers, Mrs. Larne, like to know something about our clients. So "Old English" has been to see you this——

MRS. LARNE. What a nose you have!

VENTNOR. Exactly! [*Sniffing*] Cigar— not long gone!

MRS. LARNE. Wonderful! It's quite like that great criminal—Sherlock Holmes.

VENTNOR. So you want fifty pounds, Mrs. Larne.

MRS. LARNE. Unless you *could* manage to make it a hundred.

VENTNOR. First you've heard of this settlement? Scriven? [*Suddenly*] Do you know a Mr. Pillin?

MRS. LARNE. Of course, we met him yesterday while you were there! Delightful young man, so cheery.

VENTNOR. [*Slily*] Very different from his father, isn't he?

MRS. LARNE. Oh! We don't know his father. Do tell me—they're rich people, aren't they?

VENTNOR. Ye-es, warm man, old Pillin. Young Pillin's a lucky fellow—only son.

MRS. LARNE. [*Dreamily*] How right!

VENTNOR. [*Clutching his chest*] I've got it!

MRS. LARNE. Oh! have you? [*Putting out her hand*] Even if it's only fifty, it'll be my salvation.

VENTNOR. [*With a laugh*] No, no, Mrs. Larne; no, no!

MRS. LARNE. But you said you'd got it.

VENTNOR. I don't carry fifty pounds about with me. [*With a peculiar look at her*] Unless I know I've got a use for it. I must ask you to give me a little note to Scriven.

MRS. LARNE. Oh! of course. [*She goes to her bureau and writes at his dictation.*]

VENTNOR. [*Dictating*]

"DEAR SIR,—Will you be so good as to give my lawyer, Mr. Charles Ventnor, details of the settlement of six thousand pounds just made on my children and myself, that he may have record of the matter. —Yours faithfully, etc."

Just pin your card. I'll go and see them first thing to-morrow—know 'em quite well. If it's all right, you shall have the money; and I won't charge you a penny.

MRS. LARNE. Oh! but—how unusual!

VENTNOR. Not at all! Very glad to render you the little service. Hope it won't be the last. [*While she finishes writing and pins her card, he moves down to the fire, rubbing his hands; to himself, softly*] Got the old rascal! Neat—oh, neat!

MRS. LARNE [*Finishing*] There! Such a relief! [*Sniffing*] Dear me! There's that——! [*Sniffing*] You don't smell a rat, do you?

[VENTNOR *looks round at her, startled.*

It's my dreadful boy. He keeps them too long sometimes. [*Handing him the letter*] I suppose you couldn't see Scriven's to-night?

VENTNOR. [*Looking at his watch*] Too late, Mrs. Larne, I'm afraid; but if you'll add a postscript, you shall have the money by special messenger to-morrow.

[MRS. LARNE *writes at his dictation.*

VENTNOR. "I shall further be glad if you will pay Mr. Ventnor the first fifty pounds of interest when you receive it, in satisfaction of that sum advanced by him." [*Taking the letter again*] And now I must be off.

MRS. LARNE. [*Rising*] It *was* good of you to come. I feel so different. Could I have just five pounds?

VENTNOR. [*A little taken aback*] Er—well—Oh! yes, certainly.

MRS. LARNE. [*Taking the note*] How chivalrous!

VENTNOR. Not a bit, not a bit! [*He holds her hand impressively, and looks into her eyes*] You know, my dear Mrs. Larne, I am very much at your service. Your humble admirer——

While, carried away by sudden fervour and general perfume, he presses closer, the door is opened by PHYLLIS, *who stands there with* BOB PILLIN *behind her.*

And if you—if you liked, you need have no more money troubles, I assure you.

MRS. LARNE. [*Not yet aware of the door*] But how wonderful!

PHYLLIS. The laundress is here.

MRS. LARNE. Oh! how provoking! I must just see her. Good-bye, Mr. Ventnor! [*Seeing* BOB PILLIN] Why, my dear young man, I thought you'd gone!

PHYLLIS. [*With meaning*] He came back for his *stick.* [*As her mother goes, to* BOB PILLIN *in a low voice, and pointing her chin at* VENTNOR] That's your friend.

She crosses to the fire, takes BOB PILLIN'S *cane, and holds it out to him by the end.* BOB PILLIN *takes it; and suddenly, as if moved by some force outside himself, he stretches it out and taps* VENTNOR, *who is just going through the doorway, on the shoulder. The latter turns sharply.* PHYLLIS *is at the fire glaring at him.* BOB PILLIN *is consulting her eyes.*

BOB PILLIN. Hold on a minute!

VENTNOR. What's that?

BOB PILLIN. How's Mrs. Ventnor to-day?

VENTNOR. [*Sullenly*] Perfectly well.

BOB PILLIN. [*Gazing at* PHYLLIS *and still moved by her face*] It's a bit thick!

VENTNOR. It's what?

BOB PILLIN. [*More and more moved*] Ye-es. And —er—I want an explanation, don't you know.

VENTNOR. Do you? Well, you won't get it.

[BOB PILLIN *stands nonplussed.*

PHYLLIS. [*Low*] Go on!

BOB PILLIN. I have the honour to be—er—be a —a friend here. And, look here, Ventnor, it's—it's not the conduct of a gentleman.

VENTNOR. [*Angrily*] You young——! Mind your own business, will you?

BOB PILLIN. I'm going to.

PHYLLIS. Good!

BOB PILLIN. And I won't have it. It's not the thing.

VENTNOR. You—you won't have it! *Indeed!* Now I tell you what, you'd better not exasperate me, you [*Glancing angrily from* BOB *to* PHYLLIS] moonstruck young calf!

BOB PILLIN. [*With real resolution*] Phyllis, shall I shift him?

PHYLLIS. Yes.

BOB PILLIN. Clear, Ventnor! And don't come again.

VENTNOR. By George! The impudence! I'll bring the whole pack of cards about your ears, young cock!

BOB PILLIN. Out! [*Advancing on him*] Going? Once—twice—for the last time——!

VENTNOR. [*Goes, turning in the doorway*] You wait and see which boot the leg is on!

[BOB PILLIN *closes the door.*

BOB PILLIN. Phew! What a scorcher!

PHYLLIS. [*Impulsively giving him her hand*] You've got ever so much more sand than I thought.

BOB PILLIN. [*Humbly*] Might I—I kiss it?

PHYLLIS. All right. It's generally dirty.

[BOB PILLIN *kisses it.*

[*Drawing it away*] Mother hated it. Beastly man—you do understand that mother hated it!

BOB PILLIN. Of course! *Of course!*

PHYLLIS. But you'd better go before she comes.

BOB PILLIN. [*Blankly*] Well, I suppose I must go some time. I couldn't— [*Approaching her face*] Could I?

PHYLLIS. No.

BOB PILLIN. Well, I mean to say that—er—I shall dream about it.

PHYLLIS. I don't mind. Ta-ta!

She waves her hand. He backs hypnotized towards the door and vanishes. PHYLLIS *turns to the fire, with a sneeze, and runs her hands through her hair.*

MRS. LARNE. [*Entering*] Well, that's that! The impudent woman took it nearly all.

PHYLLIS. Has she left my white petticoat, Mother, and my——

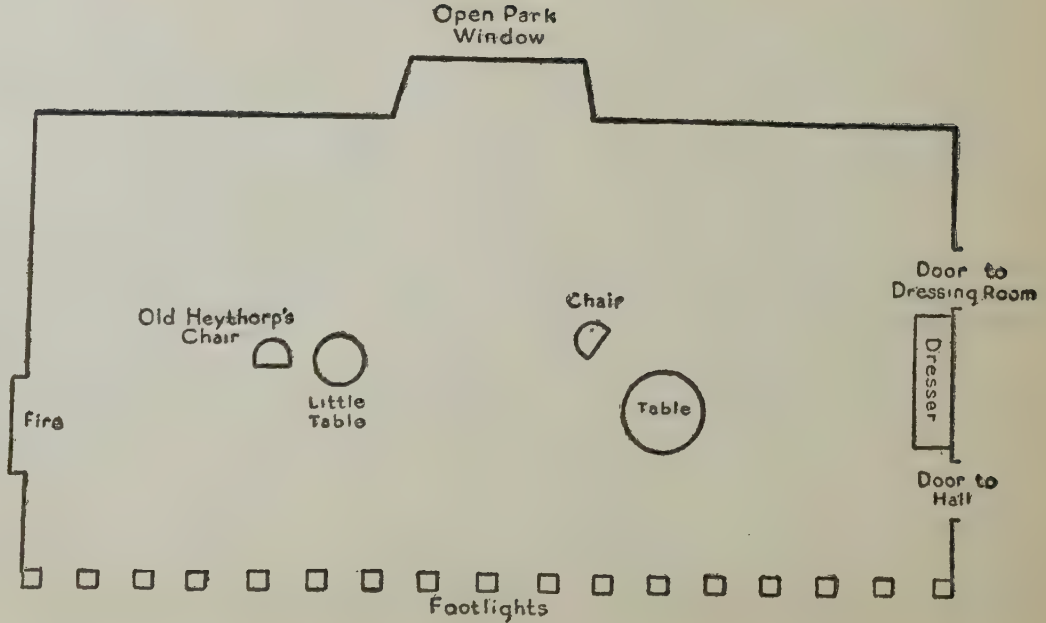
MRS. LARNE. Everything. [*Sitting at her bureau*] Have they gone?

PHYLLIS. Um!

MRS. LARNE. [*Considering*] "La vie est brève, un peu d'amour." Life is brief, a little love! Perhaps it *is* a bit cynical for the *Liverpool Pilot*.

CURTAIN.

ACT III


Open Park Window
Door to Dressing Room
Chair
Old Heythorp's Chair
Dresser
Little Table
Table
Fire
Door to Hall
Footlights

ACT III

SCENE I

OLD HEYTHORP'S *sanctum in his daughter's house—a cosy room, with oil paintings, deep armchairs, and red curtains.* OLD HEYTHORP, *in a plum-coloured velvet smoking jacket, is sitting before the log fire, Right, reading the "Morning Post." On a little table, close to him, is a reading lamp, a bell, and a card. A little pink letter has dropped to the floor. There are two doors on the Left—one to the hall, one to his bedroom—and a window at the back looking over an open space with trees. It is about five in the afternoon.*

The door is opened quietly and ADELA HEYTHORP *comes in.*

ADELA. Well, Father, are you going to keep to that absurd idea of dining here in future—giving twice the trouble?

OLD HEYTHORP *looks round at her with the white hairs on his lower lip bristling.*

I'm going out to-night: I shall have something light early, so it doesn't matter—but I do hope by to-morrow you'll feel more sociable. It *looks* so bad.

OLD HEYTHORP *resumes his paper. She takes*

up the card from the little table. It is large and has a naked Cupid.

ADELA. Cupid! With nothing on—not even a quiver. [*Reading*] "To be your Valentine." [*She picks up the little pink letter and reads, ironically*]

"DEAREST GUARDY,—I'm sorry this is such a mangy valentine. I stayed in bed for breakfast because I've got a cold coming, so I asked Jock, and the pig bought this. I'm going to get a scrummy dress this afternoon. I'm frightfully excited about the theatre to-night. It's simply ripping. Just going to have rum and honey for my cold. Good-bye.

"Your Phyllis."

So they don't call you grandfather! I'm afraid I feel relieved.

HEYTHORP. [*Very angry*] Be so good as to leave my letters alone!

ADELA. Now, Father, please don't get into a rage. [*Smelling at the valentine*] Patchouli!

HEYTHORP. How I ever had you for a daughter—why I ever put you in the position you are!

ADELA. Did my mother know about—this sort of thing?

HEYTHORP. No.

ADELA. How fortunate!

HEYTHORP. She could have stood it.

ADELA. Is that a sneer or a statement?

HEYTHORP. Your mother was as hard as wood—just like you.

ADELA. Really, Father, they tell me you have the manners of the old school—where do you keep them?

HEYTHORP. Well, you put my back up.

ADELA. I'm sorry. Are you going to Bath, as Dr. Somers wants.

HEYTHORP. No.

ADELA. Are you going, at least, to stop drinking port?

HEYTHORP. No! *Carpe diem*—live while I can.

ADELA. You know that any day you might have apoplexy!

HEYTHORP. Sooner have done with it than turn teetotaller!

ADELA. There's only one word for it—pagan. If you can't think of this life, you might of the next.

HEYTHORP. When they're roasting me, you'll be able to say "I told you so."

[*He rings the bell.*

ADELA. Profanity, as usual!

HEYTHORP. Let me alone, then.

ADELA. As if I could.

As she goes out, MELLER, *the valet, a discreet, clean-shaven man, comes in.*

MELLER. Would you like a hand up, Sir?

HEYTHORP. No! Tell cook I shall want a good dinner to-night.

MELLER. I will, Sir.

HEYTHORP. And get up a bottle of the '68 port.

MELLER. [*Dubiously*] Yes, Sir.

HEYTHORP. Send me Molly.

MELLER. Just come, Sir, by hand.

[*Hands him a note, and goes out.*

OLD HEYTHORP, *after scrutinising the note, as one does those which suggest the unpleasant, is about to open it, when the housemaid* MOLLY *comes in—a grey-eyed, dark-haired Irish damsel, who stands, pretty to look at, with her hands folded, her head a little to one side, her lips a little parted.*

MOLLY. Yes, Sirr?

HEYTHORP. Want to look at you.

MOLLY. Oh! I'm not tidy, Sirr. [*Puts her hands to her hair.*]

HEYTHORP. Like pretty faces. Can't bear sour ones. Had a valentine?

MOLLY. No, Sirr. Who would send me one, then?

HEYTHORP. Not got a young man?

MOLLY. Well, I might. But he's over in my counthry.

HEYTHORP. [*Holding out the valentine*] What do you think of this?

MOLLY. [*Scrutinising the card reverently*] Indeed, an' ut's pretty, too.

HEYTHORP. Like to keep it?

MOLLY. Oh! if 'tis not takin' ut from you, Sirr.

HEYTHORP. [*Fumbling out a coin*] Little present for you.

MOLLY. [*Gasping*] Oh! Sirr, a sovereign—ut's too much; 'tis kingly.

HEYTHORP. Going to ask you to do something as a human being.

MOLLY. Shure an' I will do annything you like.

HEYTHORP. Then put your nose in here every now and then—can't get up without a hand—don't like ringing—can't bear feeling dependent. Understand me?

MOLLY. Och! an' I *do*. And you so active in your brain, and such a grand gentleman. 'Tis an honour, ut is. I'll be puttin' me nose in all the time, I will.

HEYTHORP. [*With a little courtly bow*] Much obliged to you.

MOLLY. Would you be afther wantin' annything now, Sirr? Could I be pullin' you on your feet, or anny thrifle?

HEYTHORP. No, thank you. You're a good girl.

MOLLY. 'Tis proud ye make me, Sirr.

HEYTHORP. Tell me. Have I got bad manners?

MOLLY. Oh! Sir, no. 'Tis lovely manners ye have —the rale old manners.

HEYTHORP. When I was young I was fond of an Irish girl.

MOLLY. An' wouldn't that be the pleasure of her!

HEYTHORP. Blarney! No. I didn't know my luck.

MOLLY. Ah! the luck—'tis a chancey thing.

HEYTHORP. Yes. If you ever get any—stick to it.

MOLLY. I will that. Could I be bringin' you your tay, or a bottle, or annything?

HEYTHORP. No, thank you.

[*She goes out.*

HEYTHORP. [*He fumbles the letter open and reads*

it: drops his hand, and sits staring before him] Ruffian!

MELLER. [*Entering*] Mr. Farney, Sir.

[*He goes out again.*

FARNEY. Good afternoon, Sir. Great change in the weather; quite spring-like. I've brought you the purchase deed to sign for the Company. Pillins' have signed already. [*He places a document before* OLD HEYTHORP, *and a stylographic pen.*]

HEYTHORP. [*After signing*] Best thing the Company ever did, Mr. Farney. Four sound ships for sixty thousand pounds. Conscience clear on that.

FARNEY. [*With enthusiasm*] I should think so, Sir. A great stroke of business, I feel.

HEYTHORP. Heard from a shareholder called Ventnor?

FARNEY. No, Sir.

HEYTHORP. Well, I have. You may get a letter that'll make you open your eyes. Just write for me, will you?

"*Feb.* 14.

"CHARLES VENTNOR, Esq.,

"12 Fawcitt Street, Liverpool.

"SIR,—I have your letter of even date, the contents of which I fail to understand. My solicitors will be informed of it.

"Yours truly——"

[*He signs.*

FARNEY. [*All eyes*] Can *I* do anything for you, Sir?

HEYTHORP. Get straight back to the office and drop that on him as you go—impudent ruffian!

FARNEY. Might I ask what he——?

HEYTHORP. [*Shaking his head*] My letter'll bring him round here, if I'm not mistaken.

FARNEY. I take this opportunity of saying, Sir, how much I've admired the way you got this purchase through, in spite of all the opposition. In fact, Sir, in the office we all swear by you.

HEYTHORP. [*With his little bow*] Thank you, Mr. Farney—pleasure to hear that.

FARNEY. The way you rallied your voice for that last speech. Such pluck, Sir. I don't know if you ever heard your nickname in Liverpool, "Old English"? Personally I think it's a proud one.

HEYTHORP. "Æquam memento," Mr. Farney, "rebus in arduis servare mentem." Pronounce Horace like foreigners now, don't they?

FARNEY. I believe they do, Sir. Of course I don't especially object to foreigners.

HEYTHORP. Don't know what they were made for —except to give trouble.

FARNEY. There isn't very much of old England left, as you remember it, I suppose, Sir.

HEYTHORP. The breed goes on; it's in the bone.

FARNEY. Yes, Sir, but there isn't much meat on it, nowadays.

[*He looks at a picture.*

HEYTHORP. Bought that after the Crimea—hung in my chambers in the Albany, before I married. Never marry, Mr. Farney—lose your independence.

FARNEY. [*With a smile*] Afraid I've lost it, Sir. Can't say I ever had much.

HEYTHORP. Only thing in life. Heel on your neck —no matter whose—better dead.

FARNEY. You must have had a good life, Sir.

HEYTHORP. Lasted out all my cronies, every man Jack of 'em—can't call Joe Pillin alive. Careful fellows, too—some. Live a bit longer, I hope. Good day to you. Give that chap my letter.

FARNEY. Good day, Sir. I hope you'll live for many years. The ship wouldn't be the same without you.

OLD HEYTHORP *cuts him off with a nod and movement of his hand, and he goes out.* OLD HEYTHORP *takes up the little pink note, muttering.*

HEYTHORP. Fond of me—worth the risk.

[MELLER *enters with a bunch of hyacinths.*

MELLER. A young lady's brought these, Sir. A Miss Larne.

HEYTHORP. Where?

MELLER. In the hall.

HEYTHORP. Tell her to come in.

MELLER. Shall I put them in water, Sir? Very partial to water—the 'yacinth.

HEYTHORP. Smell 'em first—the dam teetotallers.

[*He takes a long sniff.*

Then MELLER *takes them out, and* PHYLLIS *comes in.*

PHYLLIS. I've bought my dress, Guardy! It's a

oner. I won't kiss you because of my cold. We're going to the "Mikado." Fancy! I've never seen it. Do you like hyacinths?

HEYTHORP. Favourite scent.

PHYLLIS. Oh! what luck! Somehow I thought you would. This is a jolly room. It's got all your lar-es and penat-es, I suppose?

HEYTHORP. Lārēs et penātēs.

PHYLLIS. Oh! I just read it, you know—in a novel. D'you like novels, Guardy?

HEYTHORP. Never read 'em.

PHYLLIS. Ah! but you've had real adventures of your own. Adventures must be lovely.

HEYTHORP. Not for young ladies.

PHYLLIS. I don't care a bit for mother's stories. There's always a baronet. And they're pretty steep.

HEYTHORP. Steep?

PHYLLIS. Hideously good and strong. You know, Guardy, you can't love anyone who isn't a little bad. *You* never were too good, I'm sure.

HEYTHORP. Human being.

PHYLLIS. That means you had some jolly go's.

HEYTHORP. Come here!

PHYLLIS. My cold, Guardy!

HEYTHORP. Don't catch colds—my age—haven't time. Enjoy yourself, but remember—world's hard; lots of ruffians always on the look-out.

PHYLLIS. I know. There's a man comes to see mother. He makes me squirm. We had rather larks with him, though, yesterday after you'd gone.

HEYTHORP. Oh?

PHYLLIS. Yes, we heard him being insulting to mother, and that young man—Guardy, he's got more sand than you think. You should have heard him say "Out you go! One, two—" and out he did go. I wish he hadn't, then Bob could have knocked him down.

HEYTHORP. Bob!

PHYLLIS. Well, that's his name. He really had quite a nice glare in his eye.

HEYTHORP. Who is this visitor fellow?

PHYLLIS. He's mother's lawyer; Ventnor he's called.

HEYTHORP. The devil he is!

PHYLLIS. Oh yes. You know him, don't you?

HEYTHORP. I do. So he came to see her yesterday! What about?

PHYLLIS. Oh! money. Guardy, I've been thinking about what you told me. It will be lovely to have money of my own. I think it's perfectly splendid of you, because I know you're not well off.

HEYTHORP. Poor as a church mouse.

PHYLLIS. [*Clasping her hands*] I adore your expressions—they're real old English. Being with you is like being in a boat—it's so breezy. And you've got such a ripping name—Sylvanus. It means made of wood, doesn't it?

HEYTHORP. Not quite. Name in my family old as the hills. When I go, it goes.

PHYLLIS. [*Clouding*] Don't, Guardy!

HEYTHORP. Can't stop Anno Domini. Never mind! Stick him up all we can. Give me a kiss.

PHYLLIS. On the top of your head only. My cold's coming back. Rum and honey only last three hours. I'm going to sneak Jock's go when I get in. Do you call that low down? He's only trying to have a cold.

HEYTHORP. Young rascal!

PHYLLIS. Do you ever have remorse, Guardy?

HEYTHORP. No.

PHYLLIS. Jock had it once—I never heard such a noise. [*She gurgles*] You see, he had a pet rabbit, and one day we had it for dinner without knowing.

HEYTHORP. Ate his pet rabbit?

PHYLLIS. His remorse didn't come from *that* exactly. You see, after we'd eaten it, we found out it wasn't his.

HEYTHORP. Stole it?

PHYLLIS. Not altogether; you see it came into the garden after a bit of lettuce he happened to be holding out, so, of course, he kept it. The owner only came round after we'd eaten it, and Jock got a frightful hiding; it was then he had his remorse. I do hope the pig'll behave to-night. We shall have awful larks, Guardy.

HEYTHORP. Remember! Bread and butter with independence better than champagne with a fool.

PHYLLIS. Yes. Only somehow I don't think Bob is a fool; I think he's just been too well brought up.

Were you ever in love, Guardy—I mean, really and truly? [HEYTHORP *nods*] Did you marry her? [HEYTHORP *shakes his head*] Why not?

HEYTHORP. [*Grimly*] Ask no questions—be told no lies.

PHYLLIS. No. Only—only—you know I *have* got a sort of feeling——

HEYTHORP. Out with it!

PHYLLIS. That—that you're our grandfather.

HEYTHORP. [*After a long stare*] Quite right! Sorry?

PHYLLIS. *Rather not!* I think it's awfully jolly. Did she die? [OLD HEYTHORP *nods*] Poor Guardy! [*Cuddling*] Well, it's all the same now, isn't it? Here we are! I suppose your daughter doesn't know?

HEYTHORP. Told her yesterday. Been praying for me ever since.

PHYLLIS. M'm! I don't believe in praying for other people. I think it's cheek. Besides, things that are done are done, aren't they?

HEYTHORP. [*Nodding*] Never look back—doesn't do.

PHYLLIS. [*Switching off*] I do so wonder what you'll think of me in that dress. [*Suddenly*] I know! [*To herself*] Nobby!

[MELLER *enters with the hyacinths.*

MELLER. Mr. Joseph Pillin, Sir.

PHYLLIS. [*Awed*] Oh! Is that Bob's father?

HEYTHORP. Yes. Run along.

PHYLLIS *gives him a hasty kiss, and goes towards the door, looking curiously at* JOE

PILLIN, *who enters behind his top hat, very pale and grave.*

HEYTHORP. Well, Joe, what a death's-head you look! Sorry you sold your ships?

JOE PILLIN. [*After making sure of the door*] Who was that?

HEYTHORP. My granddaughter.

JOE PILLIN. What! One of those that I've—— Does she come here? She's very pretty.

HEYTHORP. Yes. And your son's sweet on her.

JOE PILLIN. Oh, dear! He picks up with everyone. Sylvanus, I've had a man called Ventnor to see me.

HEYTHORP. H'm! What do you make of this? [*He holds out* VENTNOR'S *letter.*]

JOE PILLIN. [*Reading*] "Certain facts having come to my knowledge, I—" what's that word?—"deem it my duty to call a special meeting of 'The Island Navigation Company' to consider circumstances in connection with the purchase of Mr. Joseph Pillin's fleet. And I give you notice that at this meeting your conduct will be called in question.—Charles Ventnor." Ah! There it is! Why did you get me to make that settlement, Sylvanus?

HEYTHORP. Natural affection, Joe.

JOE PILLIN. But that's no excuse for cheating your Company.

HEYTHORP. Didn't—cheated you; they'd agreed to the £60,000 before I saw you.

JOE PILLIN. Well, really, Sylvanus—really—an old friend! But the fact remains. It's a commission—

a breach of trust. This man asked me if I knew that Mrs. Larne. What could I say? I d-don't know her. But why did he ask?

HEYTHORP. Her lawyer—smells the rat.

JOE PILLIN. Oh, dear! oh, dear! This'll be the death of me.

[*He sits down, quite crumpled up.*

HEYTHORP. Pull yourself together, Joe. Can't touch *you;* can't upset the purchase, or the settlement. Worst comes to the worst, upset me, that's all.

JOE PILLIN. How you can sit there and look the same as ever! Are you sure they can't touch me?

HEYTHORP. Not they! Keep your pecker up and your mouth shut, and get off abroad.

JOE PILLIN. Yes, yes, I must. I'm very bad. But I don't know, I'm sure, with this hanging over me. What are you thinking of, Sylvanus? You look very funny.

HEYTHORP. [*Coming out of a sort of coma*] Thinking I'll diddle him yet.

JOE PILLIN. How are you going to do it?

HEYTHORP. Bluff the beggar out of it.

JOE PILLIN. But suppose you can't.

HEYTHORP. Buy him off; he's one of my creditors.

JOE PILLIN. You always had such nerve. Do you ever wake up between two and four, and see everything black?

HEYTHORP. Not I! Put a good stiff nightcap on, my boy.

JOE PILLIN. Yes, I sometimes wish I was less tem-

perate. But I couldn't stand it. I'm told your doctor forbids you alcohol.

HEYTHORP. He does.

JOE PILLIN. And yet you drink it. Sylvanus, do you think—if my son is sweet on this young lady, we could—we could give that as a reason for the settlement.

HEYTHORP. [*After a moment's thought, stoutly*] No! Won't have it. She's too good for him.

JOE PILLIN. Really, Sylvanus! I'm sure *I* don't want my son to marry her. I only thought it would make it more natural. We could say they were engaged, and break it off later. It would prevent——

HEYTHORP. No! Won't have her dragged in. Pay my own scot.

JOE PILLIN. But if they hold this meeting and my name gets into the papers——

HEYTHORP. Won't! Leave it to me!

JOE PILLIN. He must be stopped, Sylvanus, he really must. And you—you advise me to get off tomorrow? [OLD HEYTHORP *nods*] Well, good-bye. I can't forgive you—it was too bad, you know, too bad, altogether. All the same, I wish I had your nerve.

HEYTHORP. Poor shaky chap, you are! All to pieces at the first shot. Buck up, Joe!

He holds out his hand and JOE PILLIN *puts his quavering hand into it.*

JOE PILLIN. You won't let them, Sylvanus? You can't afford it. It would make a terrible scandal. And without the fees from your Boards, you'd be a

pauper. You'll find a way; you owe it to me, you know. Well, good-bye! I don't suppose I shall be back till the summer, if I ever come back.

[*He quavers out of the room.*

HEYTHORP. [*To himself*] Pauper. Dependent on that holy woman—byword and a beggar—not if I know it!

MELLER *comes in, draws the curtains, then turns up a lamp on the little table beside* OLD HEYTHORP.

MELLER. Cup of tea, Sir?

[OLD HEYTHORP *shakes his head.*

HEYTHORP. Have my nap.

MELLER. Excuse me, Sir, can I go out this evening, after dinner? Miss Heythorp's going to a ball, Sir.

HEYTHORP. Ball!

MELLER. Charity ball, Sir, I believe.

HEYTHORP. Ah! it would be!

MELLER. The Mersey Temperance League, I fancy, Sir.

HEYTHORP. Good God!

MELLER. Yes, Sir. Anything else, Sir?

HEYTHORP. Nothing, thank you.

MELLER, *going to the door, pauses a moment to look at the old man, who, with a rumbling sigh, has taken out a silk handkerchief to put over his head. A bell sounds.*

MELLER. That was the front door, Sir. Do you wish to see anybody?

HEYTHORP. Man called Ventnor—no one else.

MELLER. No, Sir.

[*He goes out.*

OLD HEYTHORP, *on whom the light from the reading lamp falls brightly, sits back, listening, his eyes very much alive.*

MELLER. [*Re-entering, Left forward*] Mr. Ventnor, Sir.

VENTNOR *comes in, the door is closed, and he stands as if trying to adjust himself, in the dark room, to the pool of light and the richly-coloured old figure in it.*

HEYTHORP. Sorry, can't get up—sit down.

VENTNOR *draws a chair forward and sits within the radius of the light on the opposite side of the little table where the lamp stands.*

VENTNOR. I got your answer, Mr. Heythorp. [OLD HEYTHORP *nods*] I think it best to give you a chance to explain your conduct before going further.

HEYTHORP. Your letter's Greek to me.

VENTNOR. I can soon make it into plain English.

HEYTHORP. Sooner the better.

VENTNOR. Well, Mr. Heythorp, the long and the short of the matter is this: Our friend Mr. Pillin paid you a commission of ten per cent. on the sale of his ships.

[OLD HEYTHORP *makes a movement.*

Oh! excuse me! The money was settled on Mrs. Larne and her children—your grandchildren, you know.

HEYTHORP. Where did you get hold of that cock-and-bull story?

VENTNOR. It won't do, Mr. Heythorp! My witnesses are Mrs. Larne, Mr. Pillin himself, and Mr. Scriven. After I left you yesterday, you paid a visit to Mrs. Larne and told her of this settlement; told her to keep it dark, too. I happen to be her lawyer, and she telephoned to me.

[OLD HEYTHORP *makes a movement.* Yes—that gets you. The good lady is hard pressed, and she wanted to raise money on it. For that purpose she gave me a note to Scriven. Oh! you did it very neatly; but you're dealing with a man of the world, Mr. Heythorp.

HEYTHORP. [*Inaudibly*] With a blackguard.

VENTNOR. Beg pardon? I didn't get you. [*His voice hardens*] I had to drag it out of Scriven, but I find, as I surmised, that Mr. Pillin is the settler. Here's the joke, Mr. Heythorp; Mrs. Larne doesn't know Mr. Pillin, and Mr. Pillin doesn't know Mrs. Larne. I have it from their own mouths. Amusing, isn't it? £6,000 is the sum in settlement—10 per cent. on £60,000—a child could put that two and two together.

HEYTHORP. Nothing to me what Joe Pillin does with his money.

VENTNOR. Can you point to any other reason why Mr. Pillin should make this very clandestine sort of settlement on a woman he doesn't know?

HEYTHORP. [*After a pause*] Could—but won't.

VENTNOR. Easily said. You see, Mr. Heythorp, *you* told Mrs. Larne of this settlement.

HEYTHORP. Think you can tell that rigmarole to a meeting?

VENTNOR. I not only can, but, if necessary, I will.

HEYTHORP. You'll get the lie direct—no proof.

VENTNOR. Pardon me, I have the note from Mrs. Larne to her lawyer.

HEYTHORP. Nothing to connect her with me.

VENTNOR. Oh! I've not had dealings with Mrs. Larne without careful enquiry. It's well known in Dublin that her late husband was your natural son. I've got written testimony to that.

HEYTHORP. Bring an action against you—make you pay through the nose.

VENTNOR. Bluff—it won't do, Mr. Heythorp, and you know it. I've got you; the merest whiff of dicky-dealing like this will blow you out of your directorships. You've outstayed your welcome as it is. I told you as much yesterday.

HEYTHORP. Yes, you were good enough to sneer at my infirmities.

VENTNOR. [*Angrily*] I spoke the truth. And this business will finish you off.

HEYTHORP. If you're going to call this meeting, what have you come here for—blackmail?

VENTNOR. [*With growing choler*] Oh! you take that tone, do you? Still think you can ride roughshod? Well, you're very much mistaken. I advise

you to keep a civil tongue and consider your position.

HEYTHORP. What d'you want?

VENTNOR. I'm not sure this isn't a case for a prosecution.

HEYTHORP. Gammon!

VENTNOR. Neither gammon nor spinach. Now look here! You owe me three hundred pounds; you've owed it me for thirteen years. Either you pay me what you owe me at once, or I call this meeting and make what I know public. You'll very soon find out where you are, and a good thing too, for a more unscrupulous—unscrupulous——

HEYTHORP. [*Very red and swollen, and as if trying to rise*] So—you—you bully me!

VENTNOR. [*Rising*] You'll do no good for yourself by getting into a passion. At your age, and in your condition, I recommend a little prudence. Now just take my terms quietly, or you know what'll happen. I'm not to be intimidated by any of your brass. You've said you won't pay me, and I've said you shall. I'm out to show you who's master.

HEYTHORP. You cowardly, pettifogging attorney, do your damnedest!

VENTNOR. [*Seeing red*] Oho! Bluster it out, do you? You miserable old turkey-cock! You apoplectic old image! I'll have you off your Boards—I'll have you in the gutter. You think in your dotage you can still domineer? Two can play at that game. By George! one foot in bankruptcy, and one foot in the grave—Ha!

OLD HEYTHORP *has reached forward for the bell.* VENTNOR *removes it from his reach, and the old man sinks back. Somewhat relaxed by this assertion of his dominance,* VENTNOR *stands looking at the old man, who is lying back breathing hard.*

VENTNOR. Ah! that's shown you. Well, it's never too late to learn. For once you've come up against someone a leetle bit too much for you. Haven't you now? Better cry "Peccavi" and have done with it. [*Putting down the bell on the far edge of the table, he looks again at the old man, then takes a turn up and down, and again stops and looks at him*] You shouldn't have called me names. You're an old man, and I don't want to be too hard on you. I'm only showing you that you can't play God Almighty any longer. You've had your own way for too many years. And now you can't have it, see—that's all.

OLD HEYTHORP *moves forward in his chair again.*

Now, don't get into a passion again, calm yourself. [*The old man is very still.* That's better. I see you'll come round. For, mind you, this is your last chance. I'm a man of my word; and what I say, I do. Now then, are you going to pay me, and look pleasant?

OLD HEYTHORP, *by a violent and unsuspected effort, jerks himself forward and reaches the bell. As it rings* VENTNOR *makes a grab at it too late.*

VENTNOR. [*Angrily*] You're going to ruin, then?

[MELLER *has appeared.*

HEYTHORP. Show this hound out!

VENTNOR. [*Clenching his fists; then as* MELLER *moves towards him*] That's it, is it? Very well, Mr. Heythorp! Ah! *Very* well!

Carefully shepherded by MELLER, *he goes out.* OLD HEYTHORP *sits slightly rocking his body from side to side; he puts his hand to his throat as if it had been worried.* MELLER *comes back.*

MELLER. [*Close*] Hope he hasn't hurt you, Sir?

HEYTHORP. No! Open the window—get the smell of the fellow out. Lost my temper—mistake. Pull me up!

MELLER, *who has drawn back the curtains and opened the window, disclosing the shapes of dark trees and the grape-bloom sky of a mild, moist night, now pulls him up.*

That's better. [*He takes a long breath*] Get me a hot bath before dinner, and put some pine stuff into it. Evening clothes.

MELLER. Really, Sir?

HEYTHORP. Why not?

MELLER. No, indeed, Sir.

HEYTHORP. Get up a bottle of the Perrier Jouet. What's the menu?

MELLER. Germane soup, Sir; filly de sole; sweetbread; cutlet soubees; rum souffly.

HEYTHORP. H'm! Tell her to get me an oyster, and put on a savoury.

MELLER. Yes, Sir. Excuse me, Sir, but did that—er—fellow—threaten you?

HEYTHORP. Bullied me.

MELLER. Could I do anything about it? I'm pretty handy with the gloves.

[*He puts up his fists.*

HEYTHORP. No. Trifle. Give me an appetite.

MELLER. Yes, Sir. Then what time shall I turn the bath in?

OLD HEYTHORP *returns to his chair and lowers himself into it.*

HEYTHORP. Seven o'clock. Have my nap now.

MELLER. Yes, Sir. [*He closes the window and draws the curtains*] Shall I turn out the light, Sir?

OLD HEYTHORP *nods.* MELLER *turns the lamp out, leaving only firelight, then goes out.*

HEYTHORP. [*Murmuring*] Cooked my own goose! H'm!

[*He settles himself for a sleep.*

THE CURTAIN FALLS FOR A MINUTE.

SCENE II

The scene is the same, about three hours later. OLD HEYTHORP, *in evening dress, is finishing dinner, his napkin tucked in low down on his dress shirt. He is just lifting a large empty champagne glass to a napkined champagne bottle in* MELLER'S *hand.*

HEYTHORP. Fill up.

MELLER. [*Remonstrative*] These are the special glasses, Sir, only four to the bottle.

HEYTHORP. Fill up! Buzz the bottle, before the sweet.

MELLER *fills the glass, emptying the bottle.* OLD HEYTHORP *drinks.*

Good wine.

MELLER. I frapped it just a little, Sir.

HEYTHORP. [*Attacking the soufflé before him*] Old fur coat in the wardrobe, no use for it—take it for yourself.

MELLER. Thank you, Sir.

HEYTHORP. Only get moth.

MELLER. It's got it, Sir.

HEYTHORP. M'm! Afraid I've worried you a lot.

MELLER. Oh! no, Sir—not more than reason.

HEYTHORP. Very sorry—can't help it—find that when you get like me.

MELLER. I've always admired your pluck, Sir; keeping the flag flyin'.

HEYTHORP. [*Bowing*] Much obliged to you.

OLD HEYTHORP finishes the soufflé and sips brown sherry.

MELLER. [*Touching the bell*] Cook's done a cheese remmyquin, Sir.

HEYTHORP. Give her my compliments—capital dinner.

The maid MOLLY *comes in with the "remmyquin," and gives it to* MELLER.

HEYTHORP. Have my port with it.

MELLER. [*Serving the ramequin*] Excuse me, Sir, but after a bottle of champagne—are you sure you ought?

HEYTHORP. [*Digging into the ramequin*] No, but I'm going to.

MELLER. It's very hot, Sir. Shall I take it out of the case?

HEYTHORP. Touch of cayenne.

MELLER. Yes, Sir. About the port—would you mind if I asked Miss Heythorp?

HEYTHORP. [*With fork arrested*] If you do you can leave my service.

MELLER. Well, Sir, I don't accept the responsibility.

HEYTHORP. Who asked you to? Not a baby.

MELLER. No, Sir.

HEYTHORP. Well, get it then!

MELLER, *after a look, shrugs his shoulders and goes to the improvised sideboard for the*

port. He pours it out gingerly, while OLD HEYTHORP *finishes the savoury.*

HEYTHORP. Fill! [*He drinks the glass savorously*] Help me up. [*He is helped up and into his chair*] Put the decanter there.

MOLLY *enters with a tray, on which are coffee and cigars.*

MELLER. [*Taking it from her—softly*] Gov'nor's goin' for the gloves to-night. Sherry—champagne—port. Simply can't hold him in.

MOLLY. [*As softly*] Poor old gentleman, let um have his pleasure. Shure he's only got his dinner.

[*He prepares the coffee, and she goes out.*

MELLER. Shall I cut your cigar, Sir?

HEYTHORP. Um! What's that squealing?

MELLER. [*Listening*] I think it's Miss Heythorp singing, Sir.

HEYTHORP. Cat. [*Finishing his third glass of port*] Ever hear Jenny Lind—eh—Swedish nightingale?

MELLER. Beg your pardon, Sir.

HEYTHORP. No, weren't born. Mario—Grisi—old Lablache—great days of opera, those.

MELLER. I'm sure, Sir.

HEYTHORP. Theatre too—old Kemble, Power, Little Robson—once saw Edmund Kean.

MELLER. Indeed, Sir! Would that be a relation of the present Edmund Keen?

HEYTHORP. Who's he?

MELLER. On the Halls, Sir, the great ventriloquist.

HEYTHORP. No actors now. Saw Hermit win his Derby.

MELLER. [*Interested*] Did you, indeed, Sir? Was he the equal of Pretty Polly, do you think?

HEYTHORP. Don't know the lady.

MELLER. [*With a touch of pity*] No, Sir, you don't keep up with it, I suppose.

HEYTHORP. All four-in-hands then, tandems, gigs —drove my own cab—tiger behind.

MELLER. Those were little boys, weren't they, Sir?

HEYTHORP. Little rascals in boots—blue liveries—tight as a drum. Cremorne—Star and Garter. Wet sheet and a flowing tide. Great days.

MELLER. Your cigar, Sir?

HEYTHORP. [*Drinking off his coffee and taking his cigar, which* MELLER *lights*] All gone! [*Following the first puff of smoke, with a feeble wave of his cigar*] Smoke! Statesmen then—roast beef. Stout oak! Old Pam!

MELLER. Beg pardon, Sir?

HEYTHORP. Get me the old brandy.

MELLER. [*Aghast*] Brandy, Sir! I really daren't.

HEYTHORP. Bunkum!

MELLER. You'll forgive me, Sir; but if Miss Heythorp heard——

HEYTHORP. Are you my servant, or hers?

MELLER. Yours, Sir. But the doctor's orders were positive.

HEYTHORP. Damn the doctor! Get the brandy—mother's milk.

MELLER *wavers to the sideboard, and brings the bottle.*

HEYTHORP. Large glass—want to swing it round, get the aroma.

MELLER *fetches a goblet and puts it and the bottle on the little table by the hand-bell, removing the port decanter, glass, and coffee cup.*

HEYTHORP. Pour it out.

[MELLER *pours out a little brandy.*

MELLER. You said I might go out, Sir, but perhaps I'd better stay.

HEYTHORP. Why? [*With a grin*] Where I dines I sleeps. Ever hear of Jorrocks?

MELLER. No, Sir.

HEYTHORP. Good Lord!

MELLER. Yes, Sir. Of course, Molly will be handy, Sir, if you want anything.

He goes to the door, stands a moment, looking at the old man blowing rings from his cigar: throws up his hands suddenly, and goes out.

OLD HEYTHORP *very slowly and with a feeble hand takes up the glass and sits revolving it before his nose.*

HEYTHORP. [*To himself*] Send in my resignations to-morrow—not give that cur a chance.

He is drinking the brandy as the door is opened and ADELA HEYTHORP *comes in. She is in a white cloak, with one hand and arm in a long white glove and the other glove dangling from it. She has reached him before he sees her.*

ADELA. Father! Meller let out you're drinking brandy after champagne and port. That's absolute poison. It'll kill you.

OLD HEYTHORP thrusts out his tufted lower lip and reaches for the bottle.

Oh! no. If you behave like a baby, you must be treated like one.

She seizes the bottle and puts it back on the sideboard.

HEYTHORP. [*With his hand to his throat, as if he felt again the sensation of the afternoon*] So—*you* bully me—too—to-night!

ADELA. Well, really, Father! One would think you had no self-control at all. I don't know whether I ought to go out.

OLD HEYTHORP'S passion seems to yield before a thought. His face slowly assumes a sort of grin, in which there is a dash of cunning.

HEYTHORP. Perfectly well. Why not?

ADELA. If it weren't for Temperance I wouldn't. And I tell you, plainly: If you go on like this, I won't have liquor in the house. Good-night!

[*She turns and goes rustling away.*

The old man sits listening. There is the sound of a door shut and of a carriage moving from the door.

HEYTHORP. [*To himself*] Gone! Not so fast, my lady! Not under your heel till to-morrow. [*He makes an effort to get up, but cannot, and sits a moment breathing hard; then, stretching out his hand, he rings the bell*] Last night to call my soul my own.

After a moment the girl MOLLY *comes in, and stands regarding him.*

MOLLY. What would you be wantin', SIRT?

HEYTHORP. Good girl. Help me up.

MOLLY *takes his hands and pulls, but cannot raise him. He looks rather helplessly from side to side.*

MOLLY. Oh! Ut's me that's not strong enough. Would I get Cook?

OLD HEYTHORP *shakes his head. He puts his hands on the arms of the chair, and shifts his body towards the edge of the chair, then holds out his hands.*

HEYTHORP. Now!

The girl pulls and this time slowly raises him. He stands very still and flushed.

MOLLY. Sure, it's you have the big heart; it's never bate you are.

HEYTHORP. Thank you. That'll do. Want you again—ring.

MOLLY. Yes, Sirr. I'll be up all the time. It's the great unhookin' there'll be when the misthress comes home from her ball.

[*She goes.*

He does not move till she has gone. Then a smile comes on his face, and he goes across to the sideboard. Throughout the scene he retains his dignity.

HEYTHORP. [*Muttering*] Bully me—will she! [*He reaches up and takes the brandy bottle and a sherry glass. With infinite difficulty he pours into it, and*

slowly, slowly drinks it down; then, grasping the bottle to his chest, he moves across back to his chair, and sinks into it, with the bottle still clasped. For a few seconds he remains like that: then seems to realise that the attitude does not become a gentleman. Now begins his last struggle. The bottle is clasped in his arms; but his hands, with which he must place it on the table, have lost all feeling. Again he struggles, and succeeds in shifting his body in the chair towards the table which nearly overlaps the arm. He rests, breathing stertorously. Inch by inch he edges the base of the bottle till it touches the table; then rests again. With a groan and a supreme effort he screws his trunk over towards the table, and the bottle stands] Done it! [*His lips relax in a smile*] What's this? Red? [*His body sags back in the chair, he sits motionless, and slowly his eyes close*] To-morrow! [*There is a sound of suffering, and the word "To-morrow," repeated in a whispering sigh, dies into silence.*]

THE STAGE IS DARKENED FOR TWENTY SECONDS, TO REPRESENT THE LAPSE OF TWO HOURS.

SCENE III

The same. The door from the hall is opened and MELLER *enters. He moves two or three steps, looking at* OLD HEYTHORP *still recumbent in his chair.* PHYLLIS *has come into the doorway.*

MELLER. [*Turning back towards her, in a low voice*] Half-past eleven, Miss. Afraid it's too late for you to see him. He's asleep.

PHYLLIS. [*Low*] I won't wake him, unless he happens to. But I did want to show him my dress! [*She has on a cloak over a dress of white tulle, her first low-cut frock; a bunch of lilies of the valley is at her breast.*]

MELLER. As a fact, Miss, it wouldn't matter if you did wake him. He's got to go to bed.

BOB PILLIN *has moved into the doorway and stands close to* PHYLLIS; MELLER *passes them and goes out.*

PHYLLIS. [*Under her breath*] Bob, hold my cloak!

BOB PILLIN *reverently removes the cloak, which catches.*

Oh! you duffy! Is it clear?

BOB PILLIN. [*Under his breath*] Not quite. It's a pin. I'm so afraid of hurting you.

PHYLLIS. Oh! Gefoozlem! Let it rip! Ouch!

BOB PILLIN. [*Cloak in hand*] My God! Did I——?

PHYLLIS. [*Mending him with a smile*] All serene! [*She steals into the lamp glow*] Guardy! My dress, Guardy!

No answer. She stands twiddling the bunch of lilies; BOB PILLIN *closes up.*

PHYLLIS. [*Whispering*] He *is* fast and deep, isn't he? [*Holding up the flower*] I'll put it in his buttonhole. When he wakes, won't he jump? [*She steals close, bends, and slips the flowers into the buttonhole. Then kisses the tip of her finger, and blows the kiss at him*] Good-night, Guardy, dear; bless you! [*She skips back, twirls round, reluctant to go without being seen, and blows another kiss*] I do wish he'd wake! He'll be sorry he didn't see my dress.

At the disappointed whisper BOB PILLIN *walks up to the old man, and bends. Suddenly he stands up and looks back at* PHYLLIS.

PHYLLIS. Is he awake?

BOB PILLIN. [*In a queer voice*] No.

PHYLLIS. I *must* just try again.

BOB PILLIN. No. [*He moves as she comes near, and very decisively places his hands on her shoulders*] No. Not fair. Come along. [*She looks up at him, intrigued by the firmness of his voice and touch.*]

PHYLLIS. [*Wilfully*] I *will* wake him!

As she speaks, he just turns her round, and pushes her before him quietly and slowly off into the hall.

PHYLLIS. [*Under her breath, mockingly, to the air before her*] Oo-oh! Aren't we strong!

There is a little laugh from her, outside. Then the sound of a closing door, and of a carriage driving away.

MELLER *comes hastening into the room and goes quickly up to the chair.*

MELLER. Sir! [*Louder*] Sir! [*He touches the shoulder, then shakes it slightly*] Bed-time, Sir!

He bends down, listens; stands up abruptly and beckons to MOLLY *in the doorway. The girl comes quickly.*

MELLER. [*Sharply*] That gentleman's right. He's not breathing. Feel his forehead!

The girl, feeling it, draws her hand away sharply.

MOLLY. Oh! Ut's cold as ice. Oh! no! Shure, an' he's niver——!

MELLER. [*With his hand on the old man's pulse, in an awed voice*] Gone!

MOLLY. Mother o' Jasus! The grand old fightin' gintleman! The great old sinner he was!

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

END.

Y0-EMO-594